

# Socialist Worker

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# ONLY ACTION CAN BEAT TORIES 'WE MUST STRIKE FOR NHS AND PAY'

**"BORIS JOHNSON is so arrogant, so pig-headed, only an NHS strike will force him to increase our pay," says NHS worker and union activist Jordan Rivera.**

Many thousands more agree with her.

The NHS Pay Review body is set to make its recommendation in the coming days. The government has already said it wants to offer just 1 percent.

Rumours suggested the body was likely to propose 2 percent. It's an incredible insult to people who continue to put their lives on the line during the pandemic.

The nurses' RCN union said it will ballot its members for action if no serious offer is made.

"Two percent will not help us retain staff or recruit to fill the vacancies," says Leah, a nurse and RCN member. "The NHS crisis will continue and that puts patients at risk."

"But they should know that the RCN is serious about taking action. The union this week issued a video to members that tells us to prepare."

"People are burnt out and tired. We certainly can't carry on as we are. The battle now is to convince them that we can



Striking in Northern Ireland in 2019

fight—and to make sure we can win a vote for industrial action."

Jordan added that many health workers worry about the impact strikes may have on patients. So it's important to take time to explain how an NHS strike would work.

"Unison has called NHS strikes before and kept patients safe," she said. "I say to people, 'If we don't take action now, when is this situation ever going to end?'"

Jordan and Leah are right. Only action can stop the Tories from destroying the NHS and wrecking health workers' lives.

## LIFTING LOCKDOWN

## Johnson's virus plans spell disaster

by SOPHIE SQUIRE

**BORIS JOHNSON** knows that Covid-19 cases are going to soar. Regardless, he has signalled the end of all lockdown restrictions.

While breaking the news on Monday, Johnson admitted that daily cases will rise to 50,000 by the time regulations are scrapped on 19 July.

By Tuesday health secretary Sajid Javid said cases could hit 100,000 a day in the summer. They don't know what this will mean for hospitalisations and deaths—and they don't care.

Johnson has already set out his plan to blame ordinary people for the chaos to come. "People can make their own



Reckless—Boris Johnson

informed decisions about how to manage the virus," he said.

He offered support to education secretary Gavin Williamson who was set to announce the scrapping of many restrictions in schools as Socialist Worker went to press.

Bosses will now be encouraged to demand workers return to unsafe workplaces.

According to the World Health Organisation, seven of the top nine worst-hit regions in Europe are in Britain. And cases are rising at a faster rate than anywhere in Europe.

Unless there is resistance the Tories will unleash more death and illness.

>>For more see page 3



## THE THINGS THEY SAY

**'The Sun had known about the Gove-Vine separation for months but didn't mention it because he is a MOM (Mate Of Murdoch)'**

Former Sun editor Kelvin Mackenzie on how the press works

**'In any objective sense, unfit to be PM'**

Dominic Cummings, former chief adviser to Boris Johnson, claims all his other advisers didn't think he should be prime minister

**'We also knew that he knew too, since he'd told us'**

Cummings explains that Johnson also thought he wasn't up to the job

**'I think they got 1 percent. That is pathetic. They obviously deserve much more than that'**

Tennis player Andy Murray on NHS pay

**'Labour's coming home'**

Labour leader Keir Starmer recycles a Tony Blair cliché



# You don't have to sleep with a Tory to get a job

**AT LEAST 16 individuals with close ties to the Tories, including donors, peers and former MPs, have been given lucrative oversight jobs in key Whitehall departments.**

This comes after former health secretary Matt Hancock was revealed to be having an affair with Gina Coladangelo, who he appointed last year as a non-executive director at the Department of Health and Social Care.

It paid £15,000 for 15 days work a year. Research by OpenDemocracy found others in similar roles include former Conservative vice-chairman Dominic Johnson. He was appointed by the Department of International Trade.

He is also Jacob Rees-Mogg's business partner, and has donated more than £172,000 to the Conservative Party.

He joined one-time Tory and Ukip MP Douglas Carswell, who is also a non-executive at the department. Henry de Zoete, who was the Vote Leave campaign's digital director, and



Dominic Johnson

Gisela Stuart, who chaired the official Leave campaign, were both appointed as non-executive directors in Michael Gove's Cabinet Office.

The department's lead non-executive director is Lord Nash, a Conservative peer who has donated hundreds of thousands of pounds to the party.

Gove also appointed prominent Vote Leave supporter Henry Dimbleby to the role of lead non-executive director at the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) in 2018. Dimbleby, who is an Old Etonian, reportedly spent

the night of the Brexit referendum at Gove's house.

Defra's non-executive directors also include Ben Goldsmith, the brother of Conservative peer and former cabinet minister Zac. Ben Goldsmith has also donated tens of thousands of pounds.

Other non-executive directors include Doug Gurr, Amazon's former head of Chinese operations. He is said to have "deep" ties to figures within the Conservative Party and now has a role in the Department of Health.

Nick Campsie, a non-executive for the Ministry of Justice, says on his LinkedIn page that he "campaigns on behalf of the Conservative Party during the EU referendum and has made donations in support of the party's activities". Records show that he also donated to Chuka Umunna when he was a Labour MP.

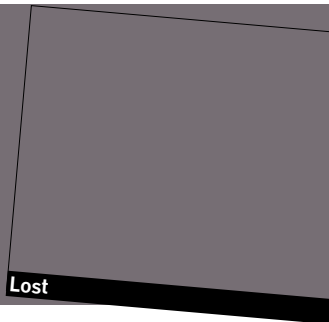
And Theresa May's former joint chief of staff, Nick Timothy, is now a non-executive at the Department for Education.

**GOOD NEWS** for outsourcing giant Serco.

It has signed a new deal worth up to £322 million with the health department to run Covid-19 testing sites for another year.

A report from the National Audit Office recently highlighted poor turnaround times for the test and trace system over the winter.

It found some 600 million at-home lateral flow tests had not been returned or logged, and were "unaccounted for".



**THE GOVERNMENT** is refusing to publish a full list of all the firms that received furlough cash, despite calls from the MPs' Public Accounts Committee.

There has been widespread fraud by firms. The department for business has said the Bounce Back Loan Scheme could cost the taxpayer £27 billion in fraud or credit losses.

## Sunak delivers more gifts for share dealers

THE TORIES are pushing through new rules to benefit banks and share dealers—and it's already paying dividends for corporate traders and dealers.

Last week chancellor Rishi Sunak secured an exemption for financial services from new global rules on taxing multinationals.

This ensures that the City of London's largest banks do not pay more tax on their profits in other countries.

The Treasury wants to allow "more flexibility" for investors to trade outside the usual stock exchanges. This will favour "dark pools", where fund



Rishi Sunak

managers buy and sell large blocks of shares without disturbing the price on the market.

All this hard work in favour of the super-rich has been gratefully noted by top bosses.

London has reclaimed its position as Europe's largest share trading centre after it was dethroned by Amsterdam in the wake of Brexit.

## Shock as oil company lobbyists lie again

LOBBYISTS for ExxonMobil have described the oil giant's backing for a carbon tax as a public relations ploy to stall serious measures to combat the climate crisis.

And one openly admitted it was about profits coming first.

Two senior lobbyists based in Washington, United States, made the admissions to an undercover reporter for Unerthed, the investigative journalism branch of Greenpeace.

They disclosed how they had worked to undermine president Joe Biden's mild plans

to limit greenhouse emissions and other environmental measures in his infrastructure bill.

One of the lobbyists also admitted that Exxon "aggressively" fought against climate science and funded shadow groups to deny global heating.

Keith McCoy, a senior director in Exxon's Washington government affairs team, was recorded on video in May. He said that the company backs a carbon tax "as an easy talking point" and an "advocacy tool" because "there is not an appetite for a carbon tax."

## Murdering soldiers let off

FAMILIES OF those killed on Bloody Sunday are furious at the collapse of the trial of Soldier F, saying they will challenge the decision in the High Court.

Soldier F murdered James Wray and William McKinney on 30 January 1972, when troops opened fire on civil rights demonstrators in the Bogside area of Derry, killing 13 people.

The ex-paratrooper was also accused of the attempted murders of Patrick O'Donnell, Joseph Friel, Joe Mahon and Michael Quinn.

Separately, the prosecution of a former soldier for the murder of 15 year old Daniel Hegarty will

Relatives of the victims last week

not proceed, the solicitor of his family have said.

A statement from the families said, "Anyone who suggests that Soldier F has somehow been vindicated, or cleared in relation to his actions on Bloody Sunday by today's decision must engage with the known facts."

"He shot dead a 17 year old boy, Michael Kelly, who presented no threat to anyone. A bullet taken from Michael Kelly's body was scientifically traced to Soldier F's rifle."

The statement added that Soldier F shot "William McKinney and Jim Wray as they ran from Glenfada Park seeking the safety of Abbey Park and wounded four others."

"He shot Paddy Doherty, a 31 years old father of six children from behind, as he crawled to safety in the area of the Rossville Flats."

"As Paddy lay dying, Bernard McGuigan, a 41-years-old father of six went to his aid waving a white handkerchief."

"Soldier F reacted to this remarkable act of bravery and humanity by shooting Mr McGuigan through the back of his head, the bullet exiting through his eye."

"These are incontrovertible facts. Soldier F did not mount any legal challenge to these findings of the international Tribunal of Inquiry, which was the Bloody Sunday Inquiry."

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# Tories pile stress on NHS, followed by a pay insult

by YURI PRASAD

**THE TORIES** are about to launch a huge gamble over lockdown restrictions—and they are using our lives as their stake.

Health secretary Sajid Javid announced last Sunday that “We are going to have to learn to accept the existence of Covid and find ways to cope with it—just as we already do with flu.”

He hopes that with over 60 percent of adults now vaccinated the link between Covid and severe illness is broken.

But if his bet goes wrong, thousands of people in Britain will be put in grave danger of hospitalisation.

Many more people will die entirely preventable deaths.

Many of the government’s own scientists are already warning that Javid’s plans are like building new “variant factories”, and that his attitude is “frightening”.

The NHS will again be at risk of total overload. Its short-staffed wards and battle-scared workers are already at their wits’ end.

## Cope

They should not have to cope with a new, avoidable wave of infections.

As if to acknowledge the threat, the Tories this week got the queen to give the NHS a collective medal for bravery and service.

That doesn’t make up for putting yourself and your loved ones at risk of deadly infection for more than a year. Meanwhile, despite all workers’ sacrifices, and the urgent need to attract new staff, the government plans to offer them yet another below-inflation pay rise.

The Tories had initially offered a paltry 1 percent increase.

As Socialist Worker went to press, it seemed likely that the NHS Pay Review body’s recommendation



RCN UNION members protest in London last Saturday. They are preparing for a strike ballot PICTURE: GUY SMALLMAN

## BACK STORY

**Health workers in England and Wales need to be ready to respond quickly to a new pay offer**

● There are rumours that the NHS Pay Review body will recommend an offer as low as 2.1 percent

● It’s double the 1 percent “pay rise” that Boris Johnson’s government wanted for health workers

● But it would still be considerably below inflation, with the RPI rate currently at 3.3 percent—making it a real terms pay cut

would be announced. Many expect it to suggest a rise of just 2 percent.

Such a pay insult ought to light the fuse for an explosion of anger from the health unions—and a fight for a 15 percent rise.

NHS workers are seething at the way they’ve been treated. A lead from the top could easily see that turn into action. The RCN union has already told its members to prepare for a strike ballot.

Even the conservative leadership of the giant Unison union could be forced into action over the issue if there is enough rank and file pressure.

The fight over pay is part of a wider battle over the future of the

NHS. The government was this week expected to announce plans to seize direct control of parts of the NHS, with a new health and care bill.

The bill will concentrate many new powers into the hands of the health secretary, and take them away from people with medical knowledge and experience.

Fighting over pay is an opportunity to raise all of the key issues facing the NHS—and a chance to close the book on Javid’s great gamble.

## What’s your story?

Email with your ideas  
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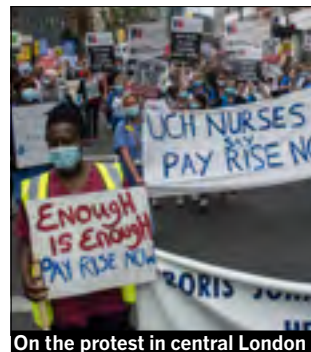
## Hundreds on birthday protests

HEALTH CAMPAIGNERS and NHS workers across Britain joined forces on Saturday to do battle for the NHS.

They held dozens of protests in towns and cities to mark the health service’s 73rd birthday—and highlight the Tory threat to it.

Some 250 gathered for a lively protest outside University College Hospital in London. Staff there are furious with the government’s 1 percent pay offer and are demanding a rise of 15 percent. They are also angry that the NHS is under attack from cuts and privatisation.

Livia, a doctor in central London, told Socialist Worker, “The NHS was already stretched before the pandemic, now it’s even more stretched. We don’t



On the protest in central London

want our healthcare system to be private, like in the US. Healthcare should be free at the point of use and available to all.”

Amerit, a health worker from the Whittington hospital in north London, told Socialist Worker, “Everyone needs to support the NHS. That means opposing privatisation attempts—and it means giving staff a 15 percent pay rise.”

“Ultimately, I’m here to defend and fight for a healthcare system that’s in public ownership. All services should be in public ownership.”

There were marches in all the main cities, with around 200 each in Bristol, Liverpool, Manchester and Nottingham.

Some smaller towns also managed a turnout, with up to 100 in Blyth, on the coast of north east England.

Around 100 people demonstrated in Chesterfield, 70 at Whipps Cross hospital in east London, 60 in both Chester and Lancaster, 40 in Bournemouth and 30 in Hastings.

Thanks to the many Socialist Worker readers who sent reports and pictures. Longer version online at [bit.ly/NHS0307](http://bit.ly/NHS0307)

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## Mental health beds crisis

THE NUMBER of beds in NHS mental health hospitals has fallen by a quarter since 2010.

Official figures show that more seriously ill people are being taken far away from home to receive treatment.

The NHS in England now has almost 6,000 fewer beds for people with conditions such as schizophrenia and personality disorders.

The drop in beds coincides with a huge increase in the number of people seeking help.

And the Covid-19 pandemic is expected

to lead to a still greater surge in demand.

Dr Trudi Seneviratne, from the Royal College of Psychiatrists, said, “Sending mental health patients far from home because there isn’t the right bed available locally is completely unacceptable.”

“It can have a devastating impact on patients and their loved ones.”

Treating patients close to home speeds up recovery, reduces the risk of suicide and shortens hospital stays.”



Dr Trudi Seneviratne



# Labour is still in crisis after a slim win in Batley and Spen

**LABOUR VERY** narrowly won the Batley and Spen by-election last week by 323 votes. It is a sign of the depth of the party's crisis under Keir Starmer that this is widely interpreted as a surprise.

And it was celebrated by Starmer as a "fantastic achievement".

In less extraordinary times, the opposition only just holding one of its seats would be regarded as a huge setback.

The election saw a 2.9 percent swing away from Labour and towards the Conservatives. This is the largest swing to a governing party for 39 years, barring the recent Tory victory in Hartlepool and the 2017 one in Copeland.

Labour won 13,296 votes while the Conservatives grabbed 12,973 and George Galloway came third with 8,264. It was a relief the Tories have not strengthened themselves further in parliament.

It was also good to see the two fascist candidates took just 97 and 50 votes.

It should have been an easy Labour win in a seat it took with a 3,525 majority in 2019—and a majority of 8,961 in 2017.

The Tory government has failed working class people and presided over an appalling death toll from Covid-19. And just days before the vote health secretary Matt Hancock was forced to resign.

The revelations of his contempt for regulations he was enforcing on everyone else may have been the decisive factor.

Labour's candidate was Kim Leadbeater. She is the sister of the former MP Jo Cox who was murdered by a fascist in 2016.

Leadbeater benefited from numerous Liberal Democrats and Greens

## BACK STORY

**New Labour MP Kim Leadbeater ran an uninspiring campaign in the constituency.**

● Her pledges included, "More police to fight crime and anti-social behaviour".

● Others were "better roads", "cleaner streets", "revitalised town centres" and "good jobs for local people".

● Leadbeater also pledged to lead a fightback against litter.

calling on social media for a Labour vote in order to build the "progressive alliance" and preserve "decency".

None of this was enough to inspire potential Labour voters. The turnout was just 48 percent, despite 16 candidates, intense campaigning and coverage across the media.

Labour offered no sense of resistance or a hunger for change. There were no concrete plans to improve working class people's lives.

Leadbeater's final leaflet mentioned Labour in only the smallest type and was wholly focused on pushing her as the "local champion".

## Trust

Zahida, a Batley voter, told Socialist Worker, "In the end I didn't vote. Boris Johnson is terrible and hates Muslims, Labour no longer stands for people like me, and I didn't quite trust what Galloway was standing for."

George Galloway, standing for the Workers Party of Britain, gained from Labour's problem and attracted some previous Tory supporters. He took 22 percent of the vote.

He did this partly through his support for Palestinian rights and opposition to imperialism. But this was combined with a horrendous attack on trans rights supporters, LGBT+ education in schools and Labour's supposedly "woke" agenda.

This is said to be "real working class" politics. It's a poisonous caricature that drags politics rightwards.

Nobody should think this is the way forward.

**FOUL PLAY**—Labour leader Keir Starmer is trying desperately to wrap himself in nationalism to win votes

## Loss of support is down to the party's own failings, not Muslims

LABOUR HAS been cheered by the fact that some Muslims did not vote for their party.

The process began before the election when a "senior Labour source" was quoted saying, "We're haemorrhaging votes among Muslim voters, and the reason for that is what Keir has been doing on antisemitism".

The disgusting message is that the reason why Muslims are choosing to reject Labour is because they are antisemites.

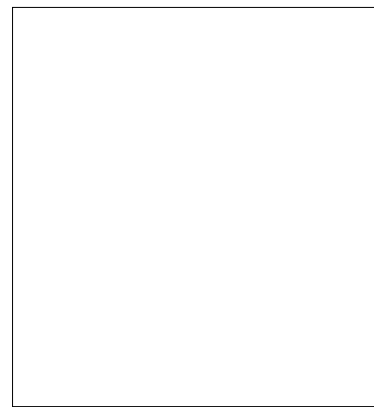
After the election two claims were made.

One was that ward data for Batley and Spen had shown that the party made good inroads in Spen Valley which usually votes solidly for the Tories.

This was tacked on to another message from a Labour source that the party "basically built a new electoral coalition in six weeks."

"Lost the conservative Muslim vote over gay rights and Palestine, and won back a lot of 2019 Tory voters. This result shows we're reconnecting with the wider electorate again".

That was backed by left winger



Rallying against fascists in Batley

Paul Mason who tweeted that Galloway's vote "was driven by a mixture of the youthful radicalism that put tens of thousands of young Muslims on the streets during the latest Gaza atrocities and the homophobia and anti-feminism of some among the older generation".

## Palestine

But these comments avoid the many reasons that voters—Muslims or not—might have chosen not to come out and vote for Labour.

Certainly the lack of support for Palestine might be one, and so might be the woeful "constructive criticism" of the Tories that have let them ride out the pandemic horror.

And perhaps Muslims didn't like being taken for granted as a group that would vote Labour because there was no alternative.

During the election Labour rushed out a leaflet that promised to support Palestinian rights and to fight Islamophobia. Was that also pandering to antisemitism and homophobia?

It's wretched and racist politics to see Muslims as uniquely reactionary, homophobic and antisemitic.

It's also a very bad electoral strategy to swap people who have always voted Labour with a wavering group that don't like some of what the Tories have done during the pandemic.

That policy can end up with more areas replicating the Labour experience in Scotland where large sections of voters seem to have been permanently repulsed by the party.



Starmer's path is not the future



# Left won't challenge Keir Starmer, despite failings

THE LABOUR left has been left rudderless by the result.

The much-expected defeat in Batley and Spen was to be the signal for the left to mount a new leadership challenge to Keir Starmer.

Of course figures such as Angela Rayner and left winger Dawn Butler will deny that. But there were strong signals they were ready to go and had already canvassed trade union figures for support.

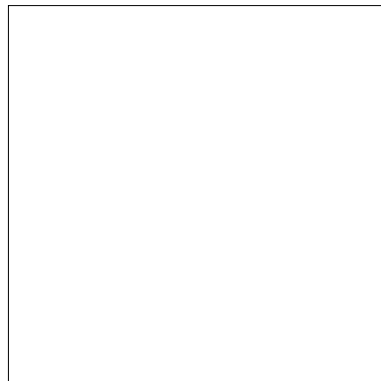
That's all gone. For Labour's left, challenges to Starmer's right wing leadership are conditioned by success in elections, not something more fundamental.

And they now have to raise once again the tired pleas of "let us in" to Starmer who has no intention of making any concessions to them.

After the result, Butler tweeted, "This is a lesson in team @UKLabour Everyone pulling together."

Starmer isn't "pulling together". He hasn't even let Jeremy Corbyn return to being a Labour MP after he expelled last December.

The Labour left has to pretend that Starmer can be persuaded and pushed to become more radical. But he will listen far more to those



Labour's left hoped to make a challenge

such as Labour national executive chair Dame Margaret Beckett.

She said last week, "Anybody in the shadow cabinet who says Keir is on probation cannot be described as a supporter. In my opinion they don't belong in the shadow cabinet."

Beckett, who systematically undermined Jeremy Corbyn as leader, will be wanting more blows against the left.

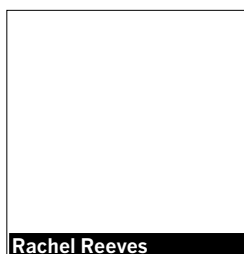
But the real problem is that the Labour left is way too cowardly and conciliatory to mount a real fight.

## Labour's 'Buy British' plan is nationalistic posturing

KEIR Starmer promised to be "bold" and put Labour on a path to "a better future—a fairer future" after the by-election. He followed it with the same tired, soft nationalism.

Last Saturday his shadow chancellor Rachel Reeves announced that Labour would force public sector bosses to "make, buy and sell more in Britain."

It would push public sector bodies to prioritise buying from companies based in Britain as a way to help "local" industries.



Rachel Reeves

The plan would include a law demanding public organisations declare how much they were buying from British suppliers.

Reeves justified her plan by saying that only one British based company was shortlisted for a

contract in building the High Speed 2 rail line.

She pretends to help workers by telling them they have interests in common with their bosses just because they are British-based.

The flipside of this is to say that workers in Britain are in competition with those abroad.

Again, the Labour left had no answer. Instead of challenging them, former shadow chancellor John McDonnell pointed out that Jeremy Corbyn promised something similar in 2018.

## Resistance outside party is key

BRITISH POLITICS is in a terrible impasse.

Johnson seems to escape every crisis despite his appalling record.

At some point he will meet his richly-deserved rendezvous with disaster. But the last year has shown it's not enough to just watch and hope he will be brought down by his own crimes.

What would really shake him would

be a generalisation of struggle and resistance in the streets and workplaces.

That's not impossible. The school students' climate strikes, Black Lives Matter, the resistance to the police bill and the solidarity marches with Palestine all give hope.

Building struggles such as these, and

raising the level of strikes, is not simple.

But focusing on such battles is will prove to be far more fruitful than endlessly attempting to push Starmer leftwards.

The whole atmosphere inside Labour hinged this week on the votes of a few hundred voters in Batley and Spen. The real struggles that change society exist outside it.

## Socialist Worker WHAT WE THINK

# NOW RAMP UP THE FIGHT AGAINST TORY REPRESSION

**T**HE TORIES are ramming home a multi-pronged assault on basic rights. They are targeting refugees, Travellers, climate change campaigners, and anyone who tries to protest in ways the government does not like.

The draconian Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Bill passed its third reading in the House of Commons on Monday by 365 votes to 265.

That's a bigger majority than at the second reading.

Some on the left denounced militant protests earlier this year because it might make it harder to coax Tory MPs into opposing sections of the bill.

That strategy failed utterly as the Tories voted down attempts to protect some protests.

Labour voted against the bill, but its opposition has been wholly ineffective. During the third reading debate, a section of its MPs put forward plans to add harsher powers on some issues.

Labour has never called for resistance on the streets. And nor have most trade union leaders, despite the threat to strikers and demonstrations the bill includes.

The battle is not over. In reality

the key arena for a fightback has always been the streets.

Now it's clearer than ever that it won't be parliamentary procedures and the House of Lords that will make a difference.

The streets will also be crucial for opposition to home secretary Priti Patel's asylum overhaul.

Meanwhile, Boris Johnson's Covid-19 emergency powers remain in place until well into next year—even after all the restrictions are lifted on 19 July.

This gives the government powers to make law without parliament and act without complying with statutory duties.

Johnson and his government are happy to drop any regulations

**“**  
**The key arena for a fightback has always been the streets**

that protect health and safety. But they are unwilling to let go of the laws that give them "emergency" controls.

The Tories' repression has two aims. One is to meet the resistance that they know will not be indefinitely postponed as they attack ordinary people.

It is to prepare for protests at the Cop26 climate talks in Glasgow, a resurgence of a movement such as Black Lives Matter or an acceleration of strikes and occupations.

The second is to create a section of "dangerous" people—enemies who can be scapegoated for the Tories' failures.

Already, divisive rhetoric has been pushed against "illegal immigrants" or "woke" activists who threaten "British values".

But this is just a taste of what is to come unless there is mass resistance.

If the bill passes all its stages, the battle will be to prevent its implementation in practice. Everyone needs to support those whose protests are targeted.

Taking the fight to streets and workplaces against the repressive state is the best and the only way to push it back.

## FLAGGING UP A PROBLEM

**R**EMEMBER WHEN the left was against nationalism and flags?

It wasn't that long ago. When Labour leader Keir Starmer started delivering speeches in front of giant union jacks, most of the left rightly got annoyed and took the piss.

A few successful England football games later, that's all forgotten.

Starmer poses in a budget England T-shirt for a photoshoot in one upmarket pub. And in another

pub, soft left writer Owen Jones takes a picture in front of a giant St George's Cross.

That's the same Owen Jones who complained about Starmer's "inauthentic flag-waving" just one month ago.

Still, as he pointed out, it was the pub that put the flag up, not him. He just happened to take a selfie in front of it.

There's a less cowardly excuse doing the rounds from other lefties on the England bandwagon. It's a diverse team, they say.

Its players take the knee. We can all unite behind this progressive patriotism.

It's plastic rubbish. There's a reason why Boris Johnson looks more comfortable in front of a flag than Starmer or Jones.

National unity—no matter how twee and fluffy—unites us with those at the top and sets us against those from "outside".

If football comes home, it's going to Johnson's house. Let's not stand at the front door begging to be let in.

## Breakfast in



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## ANALYSIS

ALEX CALLINICOS



## Good Riddance to Donald Rumsfeld

“DONALD RUMSFELD never loses.” James Mann in his book about George W Bush’s war cabinet, *The Rise of the Vulcans*, calls this “an old bit of folk wisdom that has been quietly passed around among Republicans for decades”.

Rumsfeld, who died last week, served as an aide to president Richard Nixon at the end of the 1960s. The Watergate tapes recording Nixon’s conversations show he and his hard-bitten aides John Ehrlichman and H R Haldeman regarded Rumsfeld as an ambitious and untrustworthy operator.

He proved this after Nixon was forced to resign in August 1974. The new president, Gerald Ford, made Rumsfeld first his chief of staff and then defence secretary, when Dick Cheney, Rumsfeld’s protege and deputy, took over as White House chief of staff. They systematically undermined the foreign policy of secretary of state Henry Kissinger, who was pursuing detente with the Soviet Union.

Alongside more junior bureaucrats, Rumsfeld and Cheney sought to reverse the humiliating defeat the United States had suffered in Vietnam. They laid the basis for the Second Cold War that developed in the late 1970s.

Rumsfeld’s ill-concealed presidential ambitions never came to anything, so he went into business and amassed a fortune.

He served as Ronald Reagan’s Middle East envoy. In that role, he flew to Baghdad in December 1983 to meet the Iraqi dictator Saddam Hussein.

Rumsfeld told Saddam, “Our understanding of the importance of balance in the world and the region was similar to Iraq’s.” In other words, the US wanted to use Iraq as a counterweight to Iran. Reagan and Rumsfeld ignored the intelligence that Saddam was using chemical weapons against both Iran and his Kurdish subjects.

Saddam’s crimes only became worth mentioning when—after Iran’s defeat and the collapse of the Soviet Union—his regional ambitions became a threat to US domination of the Middle East. Rumsfeld joined the neoconservative lobby that argued president George H W Bush had been wrong not to topple Saddam when the US-led coalition defeated him in the first Gulf War in 1991.

It was after Bush Senior’s son George W Bush entered the White House ten years later that Rumsfeld had the opportunity to correct this mistake.

### Crony

His old crony Cheney, George Bush Junior’s vice-president, helped to ensure Rumsfeld was appointed defence secretary.

Then came the 11 September 2001 attacks on New York and Washington. Even though they had nothing to do with Iraq, Rumsfeld dictated to an aide, “Judge whether good enough (to) hit S.H. (Saddam Hussein) at same time. Not only UBL (Osama bin Laden).”

The strategy behind targeting Iraq was formulated most clearly by Wolfowitz, now Rumsfeld’s deputy defence secretary.

He argued that the global hegemony of US imperialism was threatened by the rise of “new powers”, above all China. Seizing Iraq and installing a pro-Western “democratic” regime would entrench US domination of a region that was a crucial source of energy to Washington’s main rivals.

Rumsfeld implemented this strategy. His bullying charm made him a media star. Mann, writing in 2004, called him “America’s consummate war minister”.

By contrast, after he died, George Packer of *Atlantic Monthly* wrote, “Rumsfeld was the worst secretary of defence in American history.” Rumsfeld’s crucial error was to believe that a stripped-down but heavily armed expeditionary force, supported by a nexus of private corporations, could take and hold Iraq, an impoverished but large and complex country.

The US could indeed defeat Saddam’s army in conventional warfare. But Rumsfeld and his generals had no idea how to deal with the armed resistance that developed all over the country. Indiscriminate use of firepower and torture at Abu Ghraib prison didn’t work. Nor did encouraging sectarian warfare.

Bush had to sack Rumsfeld in November 2006. Washington’s client regime forced US troops to withdraw from Iraq in 2011. In his youth Rumsfeld grappled with US defeat in Vietnam. But he was the architect of an even greater defeat.

Rumsfeld lost big. And so did the empire he served.

# Anti-racists call to shut down ‘decrepit’ barracks

by ISABEL RINGROSE

**THE TORIES are considering using the former Napier military barracks in Kent to house refugees for “another couple of years”.**

Priti Patel was also set to publish legislation that will overhaul Britain’s asylum system this week, as part of her ongoing assault on refugees.

Lawyers told a parliamentary inquiry last Thursday that the barracks may be used for accommodation beyond September.

The Home Office previously claimed that they would only be used temporarily.

Sue Willman from lawyers Deighton Pierce Glynn said the news “is something we are very concerned about”.

She urged the inquiry to seek “further clarification” amid suggestions that portable cabins may be moved to the site from an immigration detention centre.

### Launched

The All Party Parliamentary Group on Immigration Detention’s inquiry was launched into the Home Office’s use of such sites.

Nearly 200 people, half of the residents, at the barracks contracted Covid-19 during an outbreak earlier this year.

In April the Home Office declared the outbreak was over and insisted people were living in “safe, suitable, Covid-compliant conditions”.

But senior health officials have said it is still “difficult to envisage” the site being considered Covid-19 safe.

Last month, six asylum seekers previously housed at Napier won a legal challenge against the government.

A judge ruled their accommodation failed to meet minimum standards.

It also found that residents of the barracks were unlawfully detained under Covid-19 rules.

The Home Office insisted “significant improvements” have been made.

Yet the inquiry heard that the improvements are unclear.

Home secretary Priti Patel and immigration minister Chris Philp have both defended the barracks use.

This is despite an inspection by two independent watchdogs describing the site as “decrepit”.

Patel has claimed they



**NAPIER residents protest against the awful conditions (top) The barracks are unfit for humans (right)**

February that they followed PHE advice.

At the end of last month, the transfer of asylum seekers to Napier had been suspended.

But Patel is resisting closing Napier, with dormitories of up to 12 people still in use.

The Home Office was forced to close a similar site in Penally, west Wales, amid campaigning by Stand Up To Racism activists.

Anti-racists have to keep up the pressure against attacks on refugees, as well as demanding the end of all immigration detention.

were suitable because they’d been used for “brave soldiers”.

Yet Dr Jill O’Leary, head of charity the Helen Bamber Foundation’s medical advisory service, said, “Military personnel have not been occupying the barracks for a number of years.

“They were disused for a reason.”

Public Health England (PHE) had advised against housing asylum seekers in dormitories in September 2020.

But the Home Office proceeded and told the home affairs select committee in

## Horror as 43 refugees drown

**AN ESTIMATED 43 migrants drowned off the Tunisian coast last weekend as their boat capsized.**

The refugees left Zuwara on Libya’s northwest coast in an attempt to cross the Mediterranean.

Some 84 migrants survived and were rescued by the Tunisian Navy by the finishing port of Zarzis. The boat was carrying migrants from Egypt, Sudan, Eritrea and Bangladesh,

PICTURE: FIBONACCI BLUE



Protester in solidarity

but sank after an engine malfunction.

The previous weekend 178 migrants were also rescued by the Tunisian Navy.

As the number of refugees attempting to cross the Mediterranean rises, so has the death count.

The beginning of the year saw an increase of 13,000 migrants arriving in Italy.

Border restrictions force people into dangerous situations.



# Travellers organise resistance to Tory bill

by JAKE BOWERS, Romani Journalist

**GYPSY, ROMA and Traveller campaigners from across Britain are uniting in a grassroots-led campaign.**

They are resisting the racist provisions in Home Secretary Priti Patel's Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Bill.

We were set to gather in Parliament Square, central London, on Wednesday of this week, to launch a Summer of Discontent against the bill. This bill intends to completely outlaw nomadic Gypsy and Traveller culture.

The launch of the Drive 2 Survive campaign comes as the bill continues its way through parliament. Its main aim is scrapping Part Four of the bill.

Much has been made of the bill's intention to restrict the right of protest. But much less has been made of the fact that it seeks to culturally cleanse nomadic Gypsy, Roma and Traveller culture from the British landscape.

Part Four of the bill is the single biggest threat to the traditional way of life of Romany Gypsies and Irish Travellers in our lifetime.

If passed it will entirely eradicate nomadic life in Britain and give police the power to seize Gypsy and Traveller homes.

Police will also be able to fine Gypsies and Travellers up to £2,500. And police can imprison those needing to follow a nomadic way of life because of a lack of safe legal stopping places.

## Largest

In Parliament Square campaigners were to outline how a Gypsy, Roma and Traveller Summer of Discontent will roll from Westminster to Appleby Fair in August—the world's largest Gypsy horse fair—in Cumbria.

Then it will roll to the Conservative Party Conference in Manchester in October 2021.

We have unified to fight the bill, but we desperately need help to stop it.

Chris McDonagh is an Irish Traveller activist. He says, "As nomadic people that have roamed the lands we have lived on for our whole recorded history, to suddenly be told our way of life has no place in society is totally wrong and hurtful."

"We have been part of society for generations and for somebody to decide we no longer fit is absolutely disgraceful."

"Prejudiced opinions should not have the power to destroy entire ethnic minorities. We all live in a country that is supposedly proud of its acceptance and equality for all



**Protesters resisting upcoming attacks on a nomadic way of life (above) and against the bill (left)**

new legislation means that the first Romani Kris, or council of elders, has been organised in decades.

It will debate and decide a unified response to Patel's bill at Appleby.

Hereditary Appleby Fair organiser Billy Welch says, "The people I represent are anxious about these proposals and with good reason."

"They are reminiscent of Nazi Germany in the 1930s, and the start of the process of ethnic cleansing in which Gypsies were forced off the road by fines and imprisonment."

"There are still many Gypsies alive who lost their families in that Holocaust, and they have not forgotten—this is how it began."

"All of what was done to them was legal in the eyes of the Nazis. But history teaches us clearly that just because something is legal, doesn't make it right."

This summer we will show Patel that we will not go quietly into the history books, in fact we will not be going at all.

For more information go to [bit.ly/Drive2Survive21](https://bit.ly/Drive2Survive21)

## Cops' new powers restrict our rights

THE TORIES' bill will hand the police more capacity to restrict the rights of ordinary people.

The police are already institutionally sexist and racist—so extra powers will only intensify the oppressive attacks they inflict.

Cops will be given the "automatic right to search those who pose the greatest risk" and the bill allows for "known criminals to be stopped at any time".

As black people are already nine times more likely to be stopped and searched, these



**Kill the Bill protesters**

increased powers will only see racism worsen.

And the right to protest will come under attack. Any demonstration—whether of a crowd of 10,000 or one, will be labelled "criminal" if it makes too much noise.

An offence of "intentionally or recklessly causing public nuisance" will be created. But the scope to which a protest reaches this threshold will be entirely in the hands of police.

"Causing harm through annoyance"—another vague term—will also be decided by senior police officers on duty.

Cops will be able to implement limitations to prevent "disorder, damage, disruption, impact or intimidation"—which looks to restrict the purpose of a protest.

And after statues of racists were torn down during the Black Lives Matter movement, a new punishment for attacking them will be set at ten years in prison.

The bill also looks to toughen sentences for "serious criminals".

But locking people up for long periods doesn't stop people falling into crime.

Life sentences could be handed to 18 to 20 year olds for acts of terrorism that result in mass loss of life.

This catch-all definition could include actual attacks, but also posts on social media.

Additional powers will be also created to closely monitor offenders released from prison.

These, rather than preventing crime, will be used to unfairly target Muslims.

**Isabel Ringrose**

PICTURE: GUY SMALLMAN





# Strike by Iranian oil workers spreads

Workers at Iranian oil companies are demanding better pay, conditions and more days off, reports **Charlie Kimber**

**A STRIKE by Iranian oil workers spread to at least 70 oil, gas, and petrochemical companies across eight provinces.**

It started among fixed term contract workers a day after the 18 June presidential elections.

The workers, mainly scaffolders, fitters, welders and electricians, want wages increased from £220 to £370 a month. The inflation rate in Iran is 50 percent a year.

They are also demanding the implementation of 2010 labour laws that give fixed term contract workers ten days off for every 20 workdays. Currently only permanent workers—whose numbers have fallen in recent years—are given the time off.

More days off could allow workers to return from oil rigs and facilities to homes that are often far away.

The workers also want better living conditions in communal dormitories, and higher health and safety measures. Some are calling for the abolition of subcontracting.

## Security

Most of the workers show up at workplaces, but refuse to work. Labour activists say that, if workers do not show up, they can be fired after three days or be pursued by security forces.

There are reports that 700 workers employed by contractors at the Tehran Refinery have been fired.

In July 2020, workers at 15 refineries, petrochemical companies, and power plants took part in a nationwide campaign for extra pay and other rights.

The latest action is much bigger. It was launched under the banner, “We Do Not Give Up Our Rights.”

The Council for Organising Contract Oil Workers’ Protests, which supports the rights of 41,000 contract workers in the oil industry, issued its second statement last week.

It said, “During the recent protest, many of our colleagues have gone on strike and left their workplace and gone home. However, others

## BACK STORY

**At least 70 gas, oil and petrochemical companies have been hit by strikes across Iran**

- Workers are demanding a pay rise as inflation soars, and more days off for holiday
- In 2020 workers at 15 refineries took part in a nationwide campaign
- Imperialists may try to use the revolt for their own gain
- But oil workers’ struggles have a history of radicalism against oppressive regimes

have stayed in their dormitories. By increasing our numbers, we aim to draw attention to our demands.

“We want to be involved in the decision-making process that helps to realise our demands.

“We have seen that sometimes the management of some companies has ruthlessly fired the striking day-workers and replaced them immediately.”

President Hassan Rouhani told his cabinet on Wednesday that the strike had not affected and would not affect production, distribution and exports.

## Claims

This, he said, was despite the claims of “anti-Iranian satellite TV propaganda machines”.

The false friends of Iranian workers—the US, Britain and their allies—will try to use any revolt against the regime for their own advantage. They do this while implementing punishing sanctions that hit Iranian workers hard.

But struggles such as this strike are not the result of imperialist agitation. It reflects resistance against a regime that oppresses and exploits workers.

It was the oil workers’ strikes in late 1978—amid mass protests by workers, students and the poor—that defeated Shah Reza Pahlavi’s murderous US-backed regime.

IRANIAN OIL workers on strike under the banner “We Do Not Give Up Our Rights”

## ESWATINI

# Protests rock African monarch’s reign

**AFRICA’S LAST absolute monarch, King Mswati III of Eswatini—formerly known as Swaziland—is facing a mass revolt.**

Thousands of people took to the streets in the executive capital, Mbabane, and elsewhere last week. Pro-democracy protesters burned and looted businesses in which the king holds a stake.

The resistance was sparked by the murder of student Thabani Nkomonye by police. It became a focus of hatred for Mswati who lives a luxury lifestyle while 60 percent of the country’s 1.1 million people live in deep poverty.

Mswati fled the country

as protests intensified. The repression was swift. The army killed at least 24 people on 29 and 30 June and wounded hundreds more.

It is the most explosive civil unrest in the country’s 53 years of independence.

Mswati has total power. He directly appoints two-thirds of the members of the upper house of parliament and over 10 percent of the lower house.

Only those approved by the chiefs, who are appointed by the king, can be elected in the rest of the seats. The king also has the power to dissolve the parliament when he wants.

Now his rule hangs in the balance.

Resistance sweeping Eswatini

## PALESTINE

# Settlements expose Israel’s apartheid regime

**ISRAELI SETTLEMENTS in the Palestinian West Bank are causing new crises for Israel’s government.**

Israel “evacuated” a settler outpost near Palestinian village Beita in the West Bank last week.

Outposts are hastily constructed camps of shacks and portacabins built by Israeli activists to harass and steal land from Palestinian villages. Palestinian protesters

resisted the outpost—fighting settlers and soldiers.

But an Israeli court could allow the settlers to return.

And it said Israel would build an army-linked Yeshiva—a religious school—at the site.

The scandal shows how the Israeli state uses the settler movement to strengthen its racist grip on Palestinian land. Leading

politicians in the government back the settlers.

But smaller parties in the coalition say they could rebel.

No party in Israel’s coalition government wants to end occupation in the West Bank. But some are worried that new settlements could spark a wave of resistance across Palestine—just as it did in May.



## Stop attacks on trans athletes

TRANSPHOBIC people have condemned the selection of New Zealand transgender weightlifter Lauren Hubbard to compete in the Tokyo Olympics.

One criticism that makes no sense is that she has “displaced women contenders for a place”.

But this is exactly what competition for places does all the time.

Lauren is a woman and has been selected as such.

The transphobes argue that Lauren has an unfair advantage because she developed more muscle mass during male puberty than women competitors.

But this ignores the facts that following her transition she has lost muscle mass and is not able to lift the weights she was able to previously.

The criticisms focus on just one aspect of the development of an athlete and ignore all the others, including training, commitment, diet and inherited physical characteristics.

Such advantages are already recognised in some sports, which is why weightlifters compete in weight categories, for example.

It's clear that the motivation for opposing Lauren's inclusion, and of other trans athletes, is rooted in transphobia.

The fantastic 10,000 strong Trans+ Pride march in London recently shows there is a growing mood to fight back against the war on trans rights. Attacks on trans athletes are just one aspect of this.

Laura Miles  
Leeds

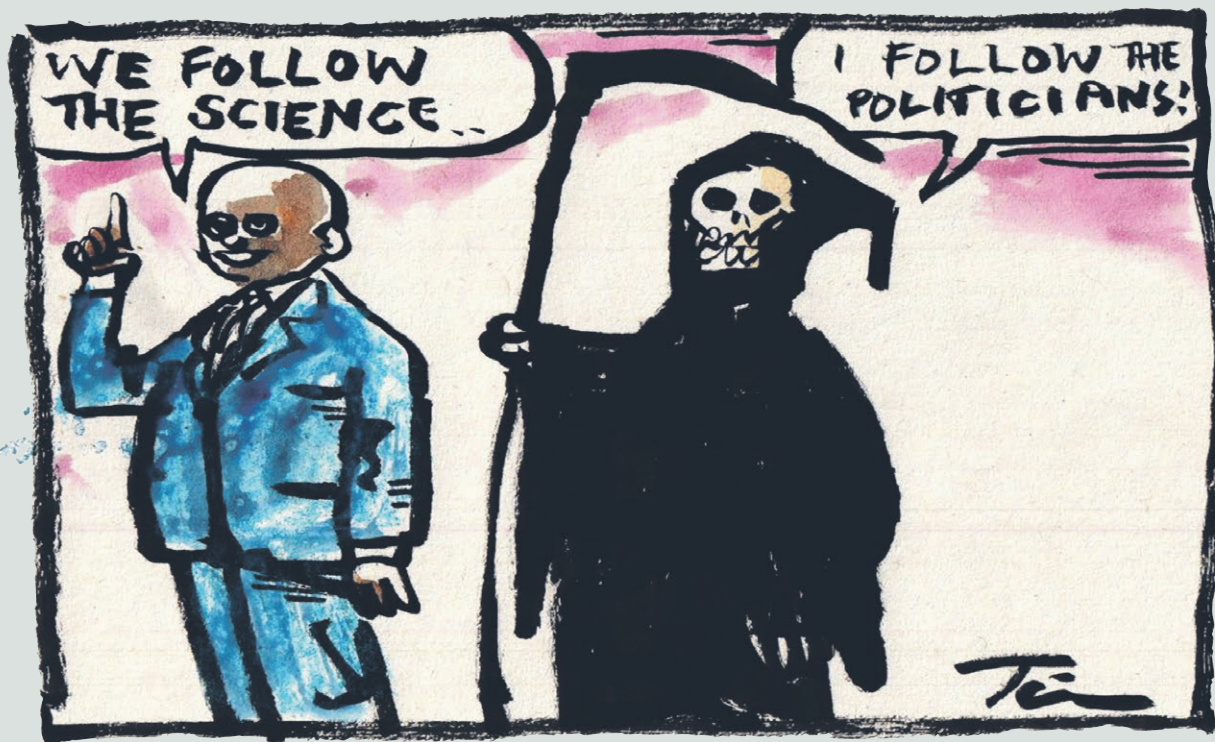


ILLUSTRATION: TIM SANDERS

## Johnson plays a dangerous game with our health

THE GOVERNMENT is putting profit before health—again. This time it's to prioritise football matches. After Boris Johnson was warned that the Euro 2020 football tournament semi-finals and final would be moved from Wembley in London to Budapest, Hungary, he abandoned many regulations.

In Scotland nearly 2,000 Covid-19 cases were linked to fans gathering to watch football.

This hasn't stopped plans for the final to go ahead at Wembley with 75 percent of the 90,000 capacity.

Of the Scottish cases, two-thirds had travelled to London to watch England play Scotland in mid-June, with almost 400 of these watching the game at Wembley.

Football administrators UEFA

warned that Covid-19 cases linked to tournament matches cannot be ruled out.

These risks haven't shunted politicians or bosses into precautionary action.

Officials claim that the protection offered by vaccines is enough evidence to prove it's safe for the final to go ahead without real restrictions.

With new strains and different reactions to the vaccine, not everyone who is dosed up is immune from catching and spreading the virus. Many people also haven't had their second dose.

UEFA claims it's the responsibility of home nations to decide on the number of fans attending.

Other European leaders have

called into question the decision to allow more fans to attend games—but this gives way for others to use the caution to their advantage.

It was enough to convince Johnson to press on regardless of scientists' advice. The losers will be ordinary people trapped in another wave of the virus.

Rising rates in Britain should mean more precaution and care. If Johnson and his government can so patently flaunt the rules, it leaves many wondering why we have to follow them too.

But it is right to have restrictions in place. What's wrong is a government set on making money and wanting the esteem of hosting a football final.

Kadra Omar  
Southampton

## Stand with Sharon Graham in Unite vote

IN MY Unite Community branch demands have been made to Socialist Workers Party members to persuade Sharon Graham to stand down in the Unite union general secretary election.

The debate in this election is about the future direction and strategy of Unite.

Graham has laid out her proposals for dealing with the effects of the economic crisis by focussing on building up trade union power in the workplace.

Graham puts a stronger case against the right wing candidate Gerard Coyne than the “continuity candidate” Steve Turner.

Arguments about “splitting the left vote” assumes that there is a fixed left vote. But turnout in recent elections has been very low.

It is perfectly possible for Graham to reach out to new forces who are desperate for a fightback and want change.

Simon Hester  
Hastings

## System change not climate change

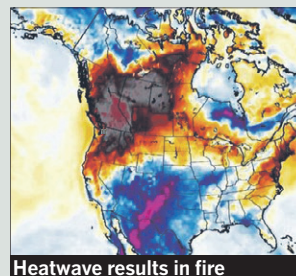
THE HEAT dome in western Canada and north west United States has led to at least 233 deaths in British Columbia alone.

Last Tuesday, temperatures reached 49.6 degrees Celsius in Lytton, British Columbia.

It also caused asphalt and concrete to melt, roads to buckle, power blackouts and water shortages.

President Joe Biden says that the US needs stronger infrastructure to prepare for extreme weather.

Governments have a responsibility to deal with the consequences of such extreme weather



conditions. But surely their main responsibility should be preventing such events from occurring in the first place.

Instead of making empty promises about tackling the climate crisis, they have to commit to a significant

reduction in fossil fuel use.

Between January 2020 and March 2021 G7 countries committed over £133 billion to support the oil, coal and gas industries.

The climate crisis will continue while the interests of big business are a priority.

The only way to stop extreme heat waves, famine and flooding is to fight for a system that prioritises people and the planet.

It can't be one based on greed and profit.

We need system change not climate change.

Maggie Falshaw  
East London

Just a thought...

## Tories are the killers

THE TORY Party, and whoever they appoint as health secretary, is more virulent and lethal than any micro-organism on the planet. To link the words Tory and health is to create an oxymoron.

Tory and death, disease and kill are far more appropriately associative words.

Leslie Bridges  
Facebook

## Don't ring Boris Johnson

APPARENTLY, IT'S not just Boris Johnson's mobile phone number that has been freely available on the web for the last ten years, but foreign secretary Dominic Raab's as well.

I don't understand what all the fuss is about. Who would want to phone these two anyway?

John Curtis  
Ipswich

## Success in Gateshead

CONGRATULATIONS to all who stood against intimidation, bullying, abuse of worker's rights, plus attempts to cut corners on basic building safety at Amazon in Gateshead. This is how it should be done—decisive action and union support.

Gary Nagev  
Facebook

## Reject Tory nationalism

BORIS JOHNSON wants his own war like his heroes Winston Churchill and Margaret Thatcher.

Barbara Cairns  
Online

NATIONALISM—why be proud of a country that treats the most vulnerable in society like this. No flag waving from me.

Wayne Taylor  
Online

## Profit Island's contradictions

WHY IS a show like Love Island that promotes a certain body type—muscular for men and skinny for women—also sponsored by food company Just Eat?

These contradictions make people feel like they can't win, and instead are just there to make money for others.

Katie Coles  
Birmingham



# A MISTAKE OF OLYMPIC PROPORTIONS IN TOKYO

The Tokyo Olympic Games is set to start this month. **Sam Ord** investigates the scale of the Covid health crisis ignored by officials, and the reality of how the event build profits and nationalism for rulers



**O**VER 11,000 athletes and 90,000 team members from 206 countries will descend on Tokyo, Japan for the 2020 Olympic Games, set to start on Friday 23 July. But despite public demands for their cancellation and an increase in Covid-19 cases, the games are unlikely to be postponed.

Officials know the current dangers. Japan's Olympic chief Yasuhiro Yamashita said there was "no way" to ensure there were no positive virus cases among teams arriving for the Olympics.

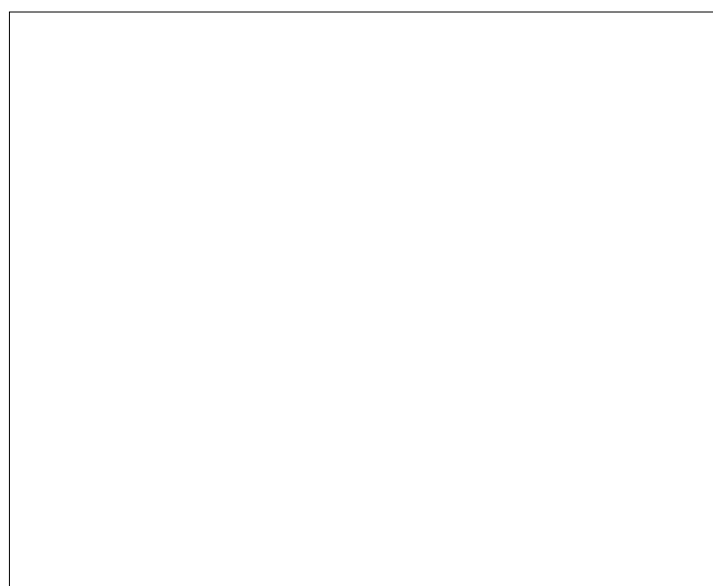
Yamashita has unfortunately been proven right as two Ugandan Olympic team members tested positive for coronavirus while they were in Japan.

The first positive case was identified at Tokyo's Narita airport which resulted in the official being quarantined. But the remaining team members were allowed to drive over 300 miles to their camp near Osaka. Three days later a second team member tested positive.

Currently only 12 percent of Japan's 126 million population are fully vaccinated. And athletes will come from countries where vaccination has hardly begun.

Rob moved to Osaka in Japan from the United States 18 months ago. He told Socialist Worker, "Some people are worried about safety, and a lot of it is frustration about how sluggish the domestic vaccination program is."

"The government appears hellbent on having the Olympics, but it's still in the



Protesters in Tokyo, Japan, demand that the forthcoming Olympic Games are cancelled



**Many people in Japan believe the government is pushing the games for national prestige**

process of vaccinating health workers and the elderly.

"It was literally just a few days ago when it started vaccinating people under 65, though it's a little vague as to how to get this done. It claims everyone will be vaccinated by the end of September, but no one believes that."

Many people believe that the government is pushing ahead with the games for reasons of national prestige, and to keep revenues flowing.

Rob added, "The people here did a very good job of handling Covid-19, distancing as much as possible, sanitation and nearly 100 percent mask use. The frustration now is that the government is fumbling on its side of the deal."

## Ceremony

Despite the Olympic safety restrictions, such as no spectators allowed in the stadiums, they're still not enough to ensure people's safety.

When asked if the government's virus control measures are enough Lu, an activist based in Tokyo, told Socialist Worker, "The Olympics should be cancelled."

"It is not a ceremony that should be held when vaccines have not become widespread, and the spread of infection isn't controlled."

"The Japanese government seems to imitate Britain's 'national spirit' when after the Second World War it held the 1948 Olympics. But no country has ever held the Olympics during the war itself."

Lu spoke about the proportion of the

## Wealth not health

DESPITE COVID-19 safety restrictions limiting tourism and spectators, the Olympics is still a huge business.

The Tokyo Games will cost £11.17 billion of mostly public money and will provide multinational companies with a platform for advertising.

Some 83 partners and sponsors have rushed to spend a total of £940 million to paste their brand over the games.

Their aim is to cash in on the huge viewing figures. Over 3.6 billion people watched the 2016 Summer Games in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil.



**Protests in response to the games have been building, but most activism has been online**





Among the sponsors are Nintendo, AirBnB and Samsung. And they know that this can be a profitable boost for their products. In the three months following the Coca-Cola sponsorship of the 2012 London Olympics, sales rose by four percent. One of the main reasons the games will go ahead is that the new prime minister Yoshihide Suga wants to present Japan as “open for business”. Suga met with G7 leaders in Cornwall recently where trade deals and future international relationships were discussed. Suga will be keen to develop these neoliberal relationships, regardless of the cost to health.

elderly population in Japan and how people fear for their safety. “The Japanese government attaches great importance to the economy, and the elderly are secondary,” they said. “The government tends to want younger people to recover the economy quickly.” Protests have been building in response to the games, but due to people’s safety concerns, the majority of activism has been online. More fuel has been added to the fire. John Coates, who sits on the International Olympic Committee (IOC), said the Olympics would continue even if Tokyo was in a state of emergency.

Soto, also based in Tokyo, told Socialist Worker that opposition to the games is widespread. Soto works in a school that has been forced to remain open. He said, “My colleagues feel the games should be cancelled, it could turn into a super spreader event or create a new variant.”

**Impact** People aren’t just worried about the impact the virus will have in Tokyo. Many believe that the impact on some athletes from less developed and unprepared countries is more of a concern. Soto added, “I do not believe a scaling down of the event will make it safe for international teams. The athletes will be going home after all and could spread it back when they get home.” Lu agreed, saying, “The official participation method set by the IOC is ‘at your own risk’. I argue that this is irresponsible as a host country.”

The Japanese state has prioritised businesses and the economy over public health throughout the Covid-19 pandemic. Leaders have been fearful of closing down hospitality businesses such as bars and restaurants and have gone no further than limiting opening hours. But these mild restrictions have resulted in one of the highest death tolls in east Asia. Currently 14,730 people have died in Japan. This number is bound to increase during and after the Olympics. In nearby Vietnam, with a population of close to 100 million, only 81 people have died.

## FAKE UNITY

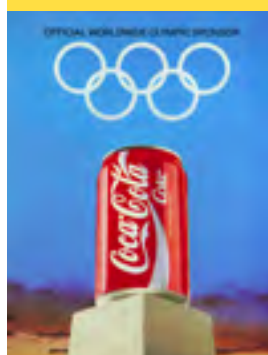
### Flag waving only benefits the powerful

THE OLYMPIC committee settled on this year’s slogan, “United in Emotion.” The games are a chance for the Japanese state to present a false idea of unity as countries emerge from the Covid-19 pandemic. People will be invited to share in what is presented as a festival of international unity, a welcome distraction from the suffering of the last 16 months. An athlete’s success and sporting behaviour will be advertised as a symbol of the good humans can achieve. But the games will be used to intensify nationalism, not reduce it.

Virtually all broadcasters, news websites and mainstream politicians will encourage identification with “our” competitors and “our” teams.

It will attempt to bring whole countries together against others. Certain countries will be identified as particular rivals whose defeat or failure should be warmly welcomed.

Think how football matches between England and Germany are used by the media and politicians.



Poster for the People’s Olympics that was to be held in Spain in 1936 but cancelled at the outbreak of the Civil War

# A tarnished brand that deserves no respect

THE MODERN Olympics is an adaptation from the ancient Greek games. Their bloody reality has been erased.

Ancient Greece was often at war and the Olympics played into that. Many of the sports were based around combat fighting. Rulers were desperate to show they had the strongest, fastest warriors.

The modern Olympic Games were set up in 1894 by French nationalist Baron de Coubertin when he founded the International Olympic Committee (IOC).

The first games under IOC control were held in Athens, Greece in 1896 and consisted of 241 athletes from 14 nations.

Many athletes called for Athens to continuously host the Olympics but, under the guise of internationalism, the host nation was rotated every four years. The IOC consisted of businessmen from various nations who held a financial interest.

Women at the 1900 Paris Olympics were allowed to compete in just two individual disciplines—tennis and golf. This meant only 2 percent of all the competitors were women.

The Olympics was commercialised from the beginning. Stock manufacturer Oxo sponsored the 1908 London Games and soft drink manufacturer Coca-Cola has been an Olympic sponsor since 1928.

## Empire

At the same time the Games are used to build nationalism. In the wake of the First World War in 1920, the IOC banned Germany, Austria, Hungary, Bulgaria and Ottoman Empire and allowed the games to be hosted by Belgium.

Workers outlined how the Olympics was an event for the elite, by the elite. The Socialist Workers’ Sport International built the International Workers’ Olympiads which ran from 1925 until the Second World War.

The organisation was supported by left wing parties and several trade unions. They opposed the exclusion of women athletes as well as the

racism and antisemitism present in the IOC. These games built upon the ideas of internationalism, friendship and solidarity as opposed to nationalist rivalries.

Germany was awarded the 1936 Olympics while Adolf Hitler was building his ideas of antisemitism and fascism. He held the games in a stadium draped with swastikas. Jewish athletes were banned from competing under the “Aryans only” policies.

Nazi Germany was the first to ceremonially light the Olympic torch. Hitler branded it a part of “Nordic ceremony” whilst stressing the superiority of white people. The tradition remains today.

## Connection

Hitler wanted to prove the superiority of white people in sport, but this fell flat as black athletes from the US took home more medals than the entire German team.

There have been iconic examples of resistance. Many people opposed and boycotted Hitler’s Olympics, considering participation as an endorsement of his ideas.

In 1968 the Mexican police killed up to 300 demonstrators who protested less than two weeks before the opening ceremony. Notably medal winners John Carlos and Tommie Smith held the black power salute on the podium.

The connection that ordinary people have with sport can be exploited. It’s not uncommon for nations to use international sporting events to distract from injustices and crimes they’ve committed.

The 2016 Rio de Janeiro Olympics led with the motto “A new world,” as £5.1 billion was invested into renovating and building stadiums.

But the games were used to distract from the fact they were built on the back of favelas being wiped out, forced evictions and 11 workers dying whilst constructing the stadiums.

Protests and riots developed in 2015 as people opposed forced evictions near the construction sites.



## WHAT WE STAND FOR

**These are the core politics of the Socialist Workers Party.**

### INDEPENDENT WORKING CLASS ACTION

Under capitalism workers' labour creates all profit. A socialist society can only be constructed when the working class seizes control of the means of production and democratically plans how they are used.

### REVOLUTION NOT REFORM

The present system cannot be patched up or reformed as the established Labour and trade union leaders say.

It has to be overthrown. Capitalism systematically degrades the natural world. Ending environmental crisis means creating a new society.

### THERE IS NO PARLIAMENTARY ROAD

The structures of the present parliament, army, police and judiciary cannot be taken over and used by the working class. They grew up under capitalism and are designed to protect the ruling class against the workers.

The working class needs an entirely different kind of state—a workers' state based upon councils of workers' delegates and a workers' militia.

At most parliamentary activity can be used to make propaganda against the present system.

Only the mass action of the workers themselves can destroy the system.

### INTERNATIONALISM

The struggle for socialism is part of a worldwide struggle. We campaign for solidarity with workers in other countries.

We oppose everything which turns workers from one country against those from other countries.

We oppose racism and imperialism. We oppose all immigration controls.

We support the right of black people and other oppressed groups to organise their own defence. We support all genuine national liberation movements.

The experience of Russia demonstrates that a socialist revolution cannot survive in isolation in one country.

In Russia the result was state capitalism, not socialism.

In Eastern Europe and China a similar system was later established by Stalinist parties. We support the struggle of workers in these countries against both private and state capitalism.

We are for real social, economic and political equality of women.

We are for an end to all forms of discrimination against lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people.

We oppose discrimination against disabled people including those who experience mental distress.

We defend the right of believers to practise their religion without state interference.

### THE REVOLUTIONARY PARTY

To achieve socialism the most militant sections of the working class have to be organised into a revolutionary socialist party.

Such a party can only be built by activity in the mass organisations of the working class.

We have to prove in practice to other workers that reformist leaders and reformist ideas are opposed to their own interests.

We have to build a rank and file movement within the unions.

To join us, turn to page 16 or go to [www.swp.org.uk](http://www.swp.org.uk) or phone 020 7840 5602

# Socialist Workers Party online meetings



HAS LABOUR'S win in Batley and Spen put an end to talk of a deal with other parties?

## Can a 'progressive alliance' beat the Tories?

**BLACK COUNTRY, SHROPSHIRE AND STAFFORDSHIRE**  
Wed 7 July, 7.30pm  
91495481031

**LANCASTER AND MORECAMBE**  
Thu 15 July, 7pm  
992-204-9372

**NEWCASTLE**  
Wed 7 July, 7pm  
368-595-2712

**SOUTHAMPTON**  
Wed 14 July, 7.30pm  
381-513-5080

### BIRMINGHAM

**The bloody history of Western imperialism in Palestine and the Middle East**

Wed 14 July, 7pm  
281-634-5938

### BRADFORD

**The US and China—imperialism and the shifting balance of power**

Thu 15 July, 7.30pm  
885-9187-7552

### BRISTOL

**Where does women's oppression come from?**

Thu 15 July, 7.30pm  
688-397-3148

### BURNLEY & PENDLE

**Marxism and disability**

Wed 14 July, 7.30pm  
446-409-5118

### CAMBRIDGE

**Let's talk about sex—Marxism and sexual liberation**

Thu 15 July, 7.30pm  
681-800-4408

### CARDIFF

**Why are the police so corrupt?**

Wed 14 July, 7.30pm  
630-181-4857

### CHESTERFIELD

**End violence against women—sexism, the police and the state**

Thu 15 July, 7pm  
828-532-8731

### COVENTRY

**Pamphlet launch: Capitalism and the Politics of Food**

Wed 14 July, 7.30pm  
823-945-1917

### DEVON & CORNWALL

**Socialists and trade unions**

Thu 15 July, 7.30pm  
865-2972-2883

### DUNDEE, ABERDEEN & PERTH

**Lenin—a revolutionary for today?**

Wed 14 July, 7.30pm  
894 2628 7708

### EAST MIDLANDS

**A year on from the murder of George Floyd—racism and resistance**

Wed 14 July, 7pm  
354-874-4790

### EDINBURGH

**From the Olympics to taking the knee—capitalism and sport**

Wed 14 July, 7.30pm  
431-459-112

### GLASGOW

**Will Biden increase imperial tensions?**

Thu 15 July, 7pm  
879-2402-3259

### HARLOW

**Grime, drill and the demonisation of music**

Thu 15 July, 7.30pm  
832-8746-7480

### HASTINGS

**What are the origins of women's oppression?**

Wed 21 July, 7pm  
871-7107-4592

### HOME COUNTIES

**Why do people believe in conspiracy theories?**

Thu 15 July, 6.30pm  
872 4922 1957

### HUDDERSFIELD

**The Covid-19 crisis and how we fight for a new normal**

Wed 14 July, 6.30pm  
290-168-1804

### KENT

**Why the COP process has failed to tackle climate change**

Thu 15 July, 8.15pm  
434-623-8064

### LEEDS

**Pamphlet launch: Capitalism and the Politics of Food**

Thu 15 July, 7pm  
881-4770-0676

### LONDON: HACKNEY

**Why won't the trade unions fight back?**

Thu 15 July, 7.30pm  
854-8245-8715

### LONDON: HARINGEY

**The Paris Commune of 1871, when workers "stormed heaven"**

Wed 14 July, 7.30pm  
459-388-1576

### LONDON: ISLINGTON

**Politics and sport**

Thu 15 July, 7pm  
874-012-7970

### LONDON: NEWHAM

**Global catastrophe and the far right**

Wed 14 July, 7pm  
818-391-0420

### LONDON: SOUTH

**Booklaunch: Mindshift—how Culture Transformed the Human Brain**

Wed 14 July, 7pm  
497-196-1801

### LONDON: SOUTH EAST

**The radical roots of LGBT+ liberation**

Thu 15 July, 7pm  
529-913-6390

### LONDON: TOWER HAMLETS

**Global catastrophe and the far right**

Wed 14 July, 7.30pm  
818-391-0420

### LONDON: WALTHAM FOREST

**Why do people believe conspiracy theories?**

Wed 14 July, 7.30pm  
543-023-057

### LONDON: WEST AND NORTHWEST

**Booklaunch: Mindshift—how Culture Transformed the Human Brain**

Thu 15 July, 7.30pm  
816-2991-5859

### MANCHESTER

**Why socialists oppose borders**

Wed 14 July, 7.15pm  
323-178-7151

### NORWICH

**Why the COP process has failed to tackle climate change**

Wed 14 July, 7.30pm  
906-652-5299

### OXFORD & THAMES VALLEY

**The Nakba—how Israel was created**

Wed 14 July, 7pm  
861-2001-6477

### PORTSMOUTH

**How can art help us change the world?**

Wed 14 July, 7.30pm  
488-934-2809

### SHEFFIELD & SOUTH YORKSHIRE

**Schools, racism and class**

Thu 15 July, 7pm  
528-174-9278

### SWANSEA & WEST WALES

**The US and China—a shift in imperialism?**

Thu 15 July, 7pm  
902-964-963

### WIGAN

**From the Olympics to taking the knee—capitalism and sport**

Thu 15 July, 7pm  
872-5136-9540

### YORK & SCARBOROUGH

**People, parliament and power—is this democracy?**

Wed 14 July, 7.30pm  
827-489-7492

## BOOKMARKS the socialist bookshop



**The Labour Party—A Marxist History**  
by Tony Cliff, Donny Gluckstein and Charlie Kimber, £14.99



**Capitalism and the Politics of Food**  
by Amy Leather, £3



**Does privilege explain racism?** by Esme Choonara, Ken Olende, Yuri Prasad and Weyman Bennett, £3



**Transgender Resistance**  
by Laura Miles, £10

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Post PO Box 74955  
London E16 9EJ



# Welcome back to Zamrock—how WITCH made a return

This documentary tracks down the pioneers of a unique brand of Zambian rock. It tells their story—and the history of Zambia too, says **Mataio Dean**

**FROM WRITER** and director Gio Arlotta comes a wild ride through the story of the pre-eminent Zamrock band WITCH and the history of Zambia.

The film's use of archival footage and uncontrived camera work to give provides a fascinating and unique snapshot of Zambia and its most renowned rock band.

Psychedelic animations pulse and vibrate in time with the complex rhythms and textures of WITCH's instrumental passages.

This film tells the story of Arlotta's search for Emmanuel "Jagari" Chanda the last surviving member of the original WITCH line-up.

Jagari recorded such classic Zamrock albums as *Introduction* and *Lazy Bones*.

Now, we discover him working as a gemstone miner and occasional teacher, his glory days as a rock star a distant memory.

Jagari's life-story echoes the story of the Zamrock genre itself. It flourished in the 1970s after Zambia's independence from British colonial rule as a musical cry of anti-colonial victory and bold cultural self-assertion.

## Joyous

WITCH, or "We intend to cause havoc," came to embody a kind of popular anti-establishment, anarchic, joyous independence. It fused British rock with traditional Zambian music and Jimi Hendrix-style psychedelic blues.

But the Zambian independence movement was not successful in dismantling the structures of imperialist exploitation. Copper prices fell, wars broke out, the government became



THE DOCUMENTARY revives the psychedelic flamboyance of Zamrock

increasingly authoritarian, the AIDS epidemic ravaged Zambia. Zamrock musicians soon found that no one could afford to attend their gigs or even own turntables.

Jagari refused to join the army because it would mean cutting his afro.

But he was plunged into poverty after being falsely accused of drug trafficking and therefore stripped of his job and pension.

He later found Christianity and a living as a miner. WITCH continued without him as a disco outfit into the 80s.

The film sees Jagari reunited with old Zamrock friends

Jagari reforms WITCH and tours Europe.

He struggles to reconcile being a rockstar with the born-again Christian within himself, but concludes, "If they want to excommunicate me for playing WITCH music, so be it! It's part of me."

## Landscape

As well as stunning wide-angle shots of the Zambian landscape, Arlotta gives us attention to detail.

We get Jagari's flamboyant 70s wardrobe, from embroidered flared trousers and colourful shirts to his signature large flowery hat being re-made for the tour.

His narration is sometimes over simplistic. But this is balanced out by the first hand accounts from Jagari and those around him—the real substance of the film.

It's a bold and valuable rehabilitation of an African rock legend.

WITCH: We Intend to Cause Havoc is out in cinemas and On Demand platforms now

# Outrageous satire can't make up for outdated jokes

## STREAMING

### AMERICA: THE MOTION PICTURE

Out now on Netflix

THIS IS Netflix's attempt to do what Adult Swim has been doing well for years.

George Washington goes on a mission to avenge the death of Abraham Lincoln—thus leading to the American Revolution.

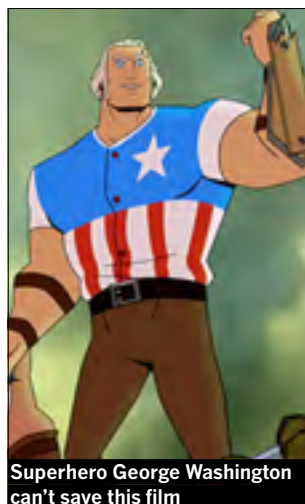
He and the founding fathers use ridiculous science fiction powers to take on a werewolf Benedict Arnold. Clearly it's nonsense, and as a

concept sounds like it should be worth a watch.

There are plenty of decent adult cartoons that take a shot at America. Sadly, this is not one of them.

Instead, Netflix has produced something which could have come out ten years ago. It's full of the kind of racism and sexism that Family Guy relies on.

It tries to let itself off the hook with black characters that point out how offensive it is. Rather than coming off as cleverly ironic, it just highlights



how bad its own humour is. A good parody should expose the ridiculousness of the thing it's taking aim at. This film instead puts all its energy into being as wild and outrageous as possible.

This would be easier to accept if anything clever was actually being said.

Instead it relies on how bizarre it is—and its all-star cast—just to get by.

Even better moments—including the introduction of automatic weaponry which squarely takes on America's gun culture—don't come close to saving

the film. Jokes that could provide a laugh miss their mark.

The movie is crammed full with so many ideas that it seems to get lost in its own sense of ingenuity.

A film that stretches the US self-image to its limit could be brilliant.

But lazy writing really lets it down.

The film is presumably trying to attack the culture of straight, white men. All it achieves is the sense that it was clearly written by and for straight, white men.

**Gabby Thorpe**

## FILM

### LAPSIS

Out now on digital platforms

WHAT HAPPENS when a marvellous new technology is invented? In sci-fi satire *Lapsis*, it brings more money for financial traders and more problems for the rest of us.

Failing to upgrade his computer cuts off Ray (Dean Imperial) from accessing essential services. Soon he's working as a "cablr", one of the supposedly independent contractors stringing quantum data cables across the US.

A chirpy app tells Ray when he is allowed to rest or go to the bathroom. The pace is set by despised, unstoppable robot "helpers."

Workers are penalised for being lapped by them. And of course, the cablrs are set against each other in competition for the most lucrative routes.

Their destinations are strange, menacing, featureless cubes isolated in the forest, carrying a technology that Ray doesn't understand or trust to be safe.

Petty thugs like Felix (James McDaniel)—the "friend" who takes a 30 percent cut of Ray's earnings—thrive in the informal "gig economy".

For-profit medical providers mercilessly prey on Ray's brother Jamie (Babe Howard), who suffers from a little-understood chronic condition.

The social commentary is a bit on the nose. It's also largely on the money.

Fittingly for a film about cables, *Lapsis* does sag a bit in the middle.

After an immersive and intriguing setup it is slow to introduce Ray's clued-up colleague Anna (Madeline Wise) and get its teeth into the central mystery.

But what sets *Lapsis* apart from, say, a *Black Mirror* episode, is that it reflects the struggles workers in these sectors have waged and sometimes won.

Casualisation and automation are shown as weapons in an arms race between organising workers and counter-attacking bosses.

Platforms such as Uber present themselves as empowering people by providing opportunities for work. Behind that propaganda is ruthless—and resistible—exploitation.

If anyone you know doubts that, *Lapsis* is the film they need to watch.

**Dave Sewell**



**E**VEN Labour's politicians don't know what their party's purpose is. As MPs got nervous ahead of last week's by-election, anonymous "Labour figures" complained to their favoured journalists that Keir Starmer has no strategy.

Most of those who secretly want Starmer to go blame his failures, or those of his aides. So the "debate" centres on who should replace Starmer, or which policies must change.

The problem is none of them—left or right—have any answers either.

Left wing MPs can't agree whether to back a challenge by deputy leader Angela Rayner, who has already turned her back on them. And the right begrudgingly accepts Starmer must stay.

Labour's crisis is bigger than its leader. The malaise is the symptom of a sickness every Labour-type party in Europe is suffering.

The voter's Labour lost in Hartlepool and Batley and Spen are only the latest in a much longer term collapse in its support among working class people.

Except for 2015 and 2017, the number of people voting Labour has fallen in every general election since 1997.

Left Labour activists rightly say this is the legacy of their party's plunge to the right under Tony Blair, his invasion of Iraq and the abandonment of the working class.

But what's telling is this same disintegration has happened to similar parties throughout Europe, and all at the same time.

**L**ABOUR-TYPE—or social democratic—parties have declined, collapsed or been almost entirely wiped out.

These are parties with real claims to represent working class people, often through their links to trade union leaders. Many used to at least pay lip service to socialism.

In reality what they offered was something different—to manage the system with promises of improvements for working class people.

Union leaders founded or supported these parties to do in politics what they did in the workplace. That is to mediate between workers and their bosses, without the need to organise strikes.

This meant they could usually be sure of support from substantial numbers of working class people, even when they didn't win elections.

These parties were far from socialist.

In government they would often fail to deliver the reforms they promised, and even turn on their working class voters when bankers demanded it.

SYRIZA GAINED mass support by saying it offered a radical alternative to Greek social democracy

PICTURE: MICHALIS FAMELIS/FICKR

# THE SOCIAL DEMOCRAT DOWNFALL

Following Labour's poor showing in recent by-elections Nick Clark explores the pattern of declining support for social democratic parties across Europe

Jermy Corbyn

They were always caught between having to manage the bosses' system whilst trying to improve it for working class people.

Managing the system always came first. But they used to at least promise to do it differently to the Tories.

Now, managing the system means a commitment to unrestrained, free market policies—a method of running capitalism known as neoliberalism. The

**“The social democratic parties were far from socialist**

“neoliberal consensus” is that almost every mainstream party in every government agrees this is how the system should run.

Social democratic parties have lost what made them seem different.

This began towards the end of the 1970s. In response to an economic crisis, bosses demanded privatisations, lower wages and minimal government spending. It was driven through with an assault on trade unions.

Margaret Thatcher's Tory government in Britain pioneered this. But even after she was forced out by working class revolt against her hated poll tax, bosses demanded whatever government followed would continue the project.

Tony Blair responded by reinventing Labour as an explicitly pro-business party.

Labour governments from 1997 onwards pushed through privatisations and slashed public sector wages and jobs. Blair went to war alongside the US in Iraq.

And Labour haemorrhaged votes and members because of it.

Similar things happened in social democratic parties all over Europe. The case of the German SPD is almost identical.

Gerhard Schroeder's SPD government was elected a year after Blair's Labour government in Britain. It also began an immediate programme of cuts—followed by a massive assault on the welfare state.

Its “Agenda 2010” programme slashed unemployment benefits and introduced charges in the health service. As a result, at least 130,000 SPD members quit the party and its vote halved between 1998 and 2010.

**I**N OTHER countries, the collapse of social democracy was even more dramatic. The financial crash of 2007 was the tipping point for many.

The fate of Greece's social democratic party is probably the most symbolic. So much so it even gave its name to this process—Pasokification.

Bowing to the explicit demands of European banks, Pasok pushed through some of the harshest austerity measures in Europe.

These included tens of thousands of public sector sackings and swingeing pensions cuts. Unemployment reached nearly 25 percent.

Pasok collapsed almost entirely. Having got 42 percent of the vote in 2009, it was booted out in 2012 with just 12 percent.

It was once one of the dominant parties in Greece. It's now folded into a lash-up of struggling centre left parties that between them have just 22 MPs.

It's a similar story in France. The Labour-type Socialist Party won parliamentary and presidential elections with its leader Francois Hollande. He promised a change from the hated and corrupt Tory president Nicolas Sarkozy and a “softer,” “fairer” austerity.

Hollande soon abandoned that and in 2014 launched a programme of tens of billions of pounds worth of public spending cuts and tax cuts for businesses. He followed it up with a sweeping assault on workplace rights that sparked a revolt of strikes and protests on the streets.

These confrontations with



workers added another side to social democratic parties' crisis.

It wasn't just working class people who became bitter at the parties they'd ended up fighting against—it was union leaders too.

The parties union leaders had founded or supported to defend their interests were now attacking them. The pressure to defend their members—and their positions—sometimes led them to lead strikes against governments where social democratic parties were in office.

**LABOUR'S attacks on workers while in government—and its refusal to support them in strikes against the Tories—led even right wing union leaders to criticise it openly.**

Some union leaders began talking about breaking with their social democratic parties. Some even did just that. Mostly they avoided any final break or major confrontation, trying and mostly succeeding to contain strikes in favour of negotiations.

But this strained relationship between social democratic parties and their most significant backers contributed to the erosion of their support among union activists.

This collapse in support for mainstream parties—left and right—has created openings for other parties. In far too many places, right wing and racist parties have made the running.

But in other cases the left made headway too

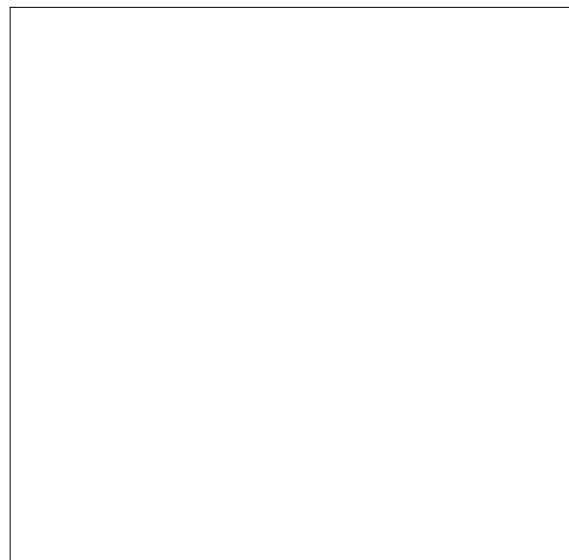
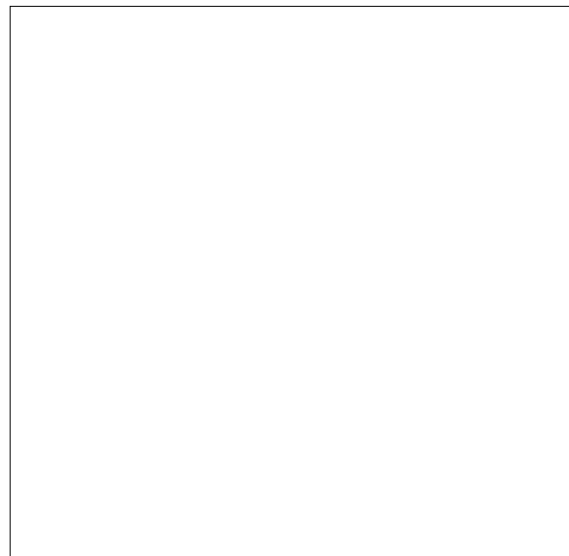
The most obvious examples are the once-radical left wing party Syriza in Greece, which was elected to government in 2015, and Podemos in Spain, which joined a coalition.

They both grew as explicit alternatives to the social democratic parties. Jeremy Corbyn's leadership of the Labour Party represented the same anger at the party's old leaders—and hope for a better politics.

But unlike Syriza in Greece, Corbyn helped to sustain Britain's social democratic party.

Socialists and Corbyn's supporters often point out that his leadership temporarily reversed Labour's decline. His general election campaign in 2017 was the first time Labour increased its share of the vote in 20 years.

But another way of looking



**Former French Socialist Party leader François Hollande (top) Podemos was claimed to be a radical alternative (above)**

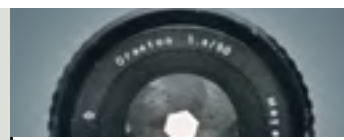
at it is that Corbyn's leadership simply delayed Labour's crisis.

Corbyn never managed to get over the pressure to convince his MPs and bosses that he could be allowed to run a government. His attempts to do that led to his downfall.

Syriza and Podemos could never square this circle either. In government, Syriza repeated Pasok's performance and implemented austerity demanded by bankers. Podemos joined a coalition with the social democratic party it once claimed to be replacing.

Social democratic parties—and their supposed left wing alternatives—are all in crisis because none of them can deliver the reforms they promise within a system that demands constant attacks on working class people.

Overcoming that takes more than a change of leadership. It needs an organisation and a fight based on challenging the system, not working for reforms within it.



**FOCUS ON  
IMPERIALISM**

## Afghanistan—a bloody failure for US imperialism

With the last US troops set to leave Afghanistan, Yuri Prasad looks at how president Joe Biden is dealing with their defeat

THE WEST'S 20-year war on Afghanistan has ended in defeat.

That was the conclusion of General Lord Dannatt writing in the Daily Telegraph newspaper last week.

As the last US troops departed Bagram Airfield last Friday, looters moved into the giant complex and grabbed whatever the Americans had left.

The withdrawal shows that the last 2,500 to 3,500 US troops have left or are nearing departure from Afghanistan. This is months ahead of president Joe Biden's promise that they would be gone by 11 September.

Meanwhile, the Taliban fighters that George Bush and Tony Blair had pledged to crush back in 2001 were busy overrunning the Afghan army in district after district.

### Overthrown

US military analysts give the government in the capital Kabul as little as six months before its power is overthrown.

"Ultimately, Taliban force of arms has prevailed, and the people of that country have been denied the chance to choose a better way of life," Lord Dannatt said. "Tragically, a descent into the chaos of civil war seems highly likely."

The price of the West's failed mission must be measured in blood. Many hundreds of thousands of Afghan civilians were killed, mostly in US airstrikes.

The numbers will never be exact because Western forces did not count their remains. Hundreds of Nato troops also lost their lives in the war that quickly became a quagmire.

It's all a far cry from the run-up to the war two decades ago.

Back then prime minister Blair sought to portray himself as a

### US TROOPS have left Bagram air base

"compassionate" invader.

He insisted regime change wasn't simply about American power. Britain was there to ensure far more laudable aims—including giving rights to women and opening schools.

"This cause is just," Blair said. "We have to act, for humanitarian reasons to alleviate the appalling suffering of the Afghan people."

Much of the liberal establishment went along with him.

This continued despite evidence of US bombs killing the women and hitting the schools the West was supposed to be saving.

But when the bodies piled up, few people outside of Kabul's security cordon were prepared to put their faith in the occupation.

The situation deteriorated and Afghanistan became the US's longest war—"unwinnable" at best.

The occupation's only real function now was as a demonstration of US military power, flaunted in the hope that it would deter future challengers.

"Look at the scene.



**Few people were prepared to put their faith in the occupation**

We are in shambles. The country is in conflict. There is immense suffering," said former Afghan president, Hamid Karzai.

"Those who came here 20 years ago in the name of fighting extremism and terrorism not only failed to end it but, under their watch, extremism has flourished. That is what I call failure."

Many now agree with Dannatt and predict a new civil war between various warlords and the Taliban.

It's a horrifying prospect for people who have known nothing but brutal conflict since the Russian occupation that began in 1979.

But for Biden, the last moves have not yet been played.

### Attacks

The CIA is now in negotiations with the Pakistani government to reopen a US airbase once used for drone attacks on Afghanistan.

This is despite Pakistan kicking out the Americans in 2011, and the country's ISI secret service being the main backers of the Taliban.

US diplomats are also exploring the option of regaining access to bases in former Soviet republics that once were used for Russia's Afghanistan war.

Yet this time around, there will be no boots on the ground.

In order to "liberate" Afghanistan, Biden will now rely solely on missiles launched on the territory from military bases thousands of miles away.

### READ MORE

● **The Labour Party: A Marxist History**  
by Tony Cliff,  
Charlie Kimber,  
Donny Gluckstein  
£14.99

● **Reform or Revolution and the Mass Strike**  
by Rosa Luxemburg  
£10.99

● **Why did Labour lose in 2019?**  
by Charlie Kimber  
[bit.ly/Why2019](https://bit.ly/Why2019)

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# Poor pay the deadly cost of Covid-19 says report

by YURI PRASAD

WHY HAVE the poorest people in Britain paid the highest price during the pandemic?

They have taken the biggest hit on every index—from exposure to the virus and lack of economic support to severe infection and death.

For Sir Michael Marmot the answer is that government policy has for years increased health and social inequalities to previously unimaginable levels.

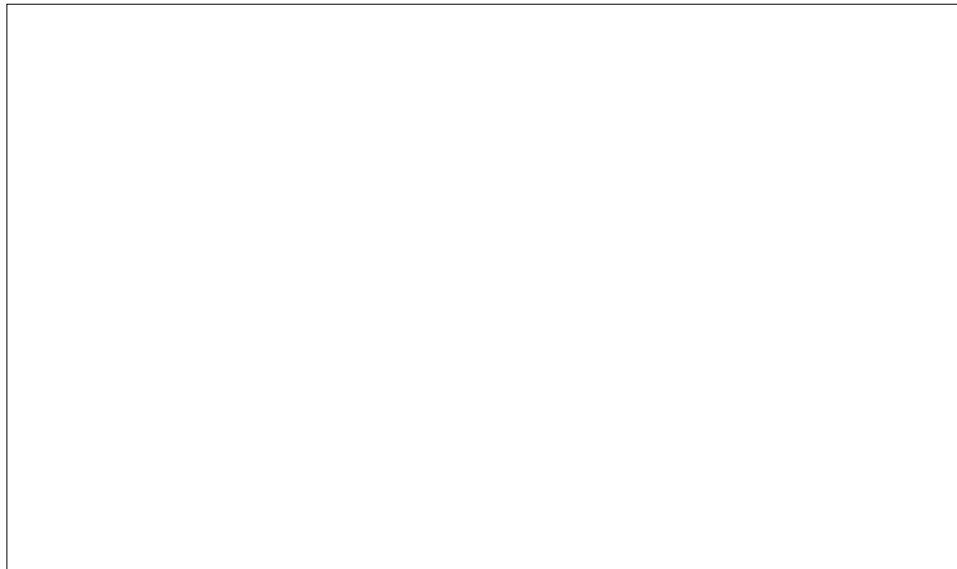
And, he says, few places show the cost of this policy better than Greater Manchester.

Marmot argues that the unfairness of austerity was magnified by Covid-19.

He says that unless urgent measures are taken now, the lives of millions of people will be blighted for a generation to come.

His report shows the coronavirus death rate in Greater Manchester was 25 percent higher than the average across England during the year to March 2021.

This in turn has led to “jaw-dropping” falls in life



DEATH RATES are worse in areas such as Manchester

expectancy. In the north west of England it declined more than a year for women during 2020—far worse than in England overall.

But a closer look at the report reveals that the region is itself heavily divided between rich and poor.

Someone in the poorest 10 percent of the population of Greater Manchester was

2.3 times more likely to die from Covid-19 than a person from the richest 10 percent.

Marmot's findings strike a chord with Mark, a longstanding social worker for children and people with mental health difficulties in Manchester.

“He's right to say the problems the problem of poverty is behind our Covid figures,”

Mark told Socialist Worker. “And, he's right to say the problems long predate the pandemic.”

“The real turning point was the era of austerity after 2010.”

“I've seen loads of people who have absolutely no food in their house.”

“I've been in flats where very vulnerable people have

no carpets and giant rats are running around everywhere.”

Mark says that many people who have really struggled during the pandemic are completely cut off from the rest of society.

The fall in life expectancy that Marmot's report outlines is not simply a result of people falling ill with Covid-19, but the collapse of services that are supposed to help them.

## Threatening

That too can be life-threatening. Mark said, “Some of the people without food that I've seen are older and they've lost contact with everyone during lockdown. Not just their friends and family, but with support workers and nurses too.”

“These people are really struggling.”

Mark says the problem of homelessness also helps spread the coronavirus.

Over 5,000 people are homeless in the region, and many more are not counted in official statistics.

“A lot of younger people without a permanent home are ‘sofa-surfing’. They are going from one house

to another,” he says. That means close contact with many different groups of people and increases the risk of transmission.

Those people are in turn told that they are responsible for spreading the virus.

“Austerity has been used to pin the blame on the policies' victims, rather than the system itself,” says Mark.

The strength of Marmot's report is that it lays into the Tories for the crime of austerity.

## Blame

And it doesn't join in with the attempt to blame the victims of neoliberal policy.

But its recommendations for what should be done now are far too timid, and don't match the scale of the problem it outlines.

The report calls on the government to fund a range of programmes so that it can deliver on its own “levelling up” agenda.

But for the Tories, austerity-driven poverty was never an oversight—it was a planned political choice.

To read the full report go to [bit.ly/Marmot2021](https://bit.ly/Marmot2021)

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# Danger as Tories plan to end school Covid safety rules

Failed education secretary Gavin Williamson wants to end the system of pupil ‘bubbles’ even as coronavirus cases soar. **Sophie Squire** talked to school workers who now fear the worst

**COVID cases are rising in schools. Last week more than 375,000 pupils in England, about one in 20, were forced to self-isolate because of possible exposure to the virus. That's up by 130,000 in a week.**

Despite the danger posed to both students and staff the Tories are determined to push ahead with easing restrictions.

Education secretary Gavin Williamson has signalled a shift to more Covid testing in schools from September, rather than having to send home whole “bubbles” of pupils when someone tests positive.

In fact he overstates what happens. Already in some schools only children who sit near to a positive case are sent home, not entire classes.

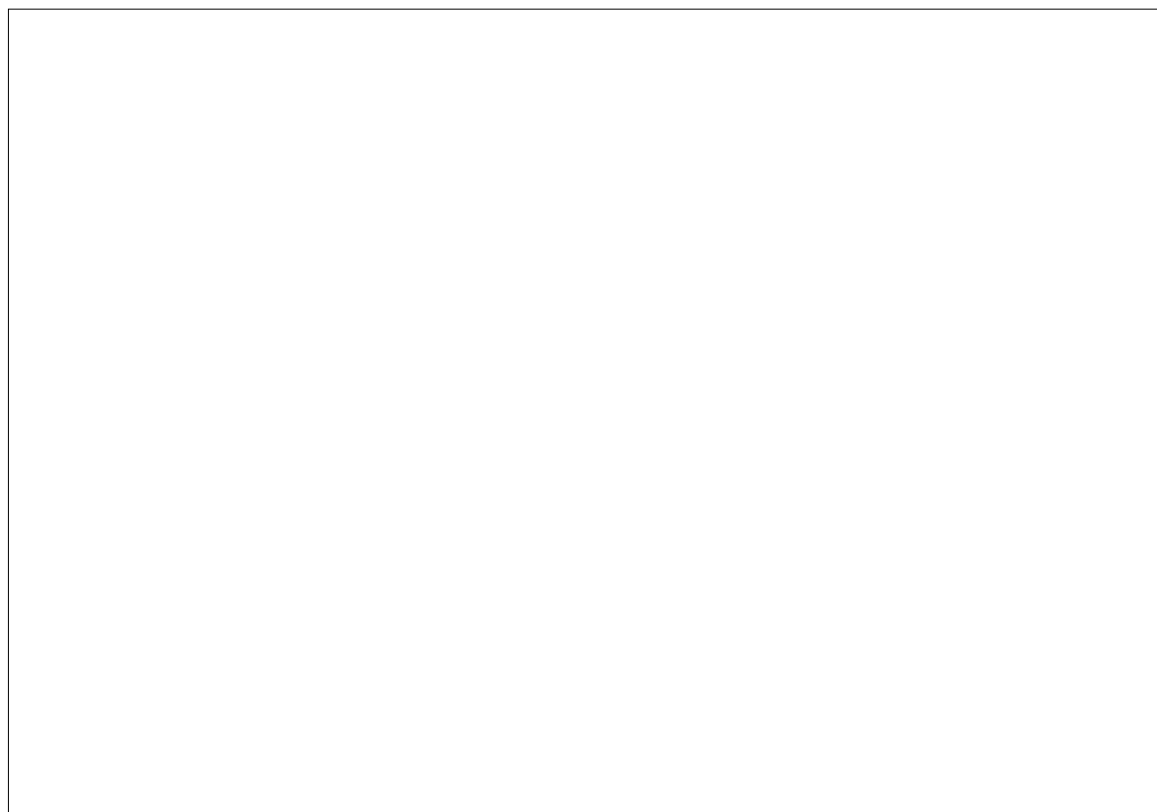
Williamson says he wants the bubble system removed “as quickly as possible along with wider restrictions in society”.

The move is causing alarm among teachers.

“There are more stringent measures that could be brought in right now, and it is a mystery as to why Gavin Williamson continues to do nothing,” said Kevin Courtney, joint general secretary of the NEU union.

Chris is a teacher and union activist in the West Midlands. He told Socialist Worker, “The government is trying to say we can return to normal in schools.

“But how is that possible when cases continue to climb and the



THE ‘BUBBLE’ system helps isolate potential infections and stops the virus spreading

Delta variant means the virus is much more transmissible?

“Schools are driving the spike in cases, but there are plans to scrap all precautions. It makes no sense.”

In Southampton cases have risen

fast. Last week the local council reported 51 cases of the virus in education settings. There had been only one the previous week.

Teacher Jodie says that while her school has made every effort to

keep staff and students safe, new cases have been recorded.

She told Socialist Worker, “The Tories seem to think there is a magical force field around schools, that it just doesn’t affect us. But I don’t

know one school locally that hasn’t been affected.”

Both Jodie and Chris say that behind the Tories’ push to end restrictions is a drive to save money.

“If the government had listened to teachers and the union, made it easier for us to socially distance and funnelled money into an education recovery plan, all of this could have been avoided,” said Chris.

## Restrictions

“The Education Policy Institute said that £15 billion was needed for education recovery after Covid. The government gave us just over £1 billion.”

And Jodie added that if the plans to lift restrictions go ahead, teachers must mount a fightback like they did in January of this year.

“We embarrassed the government in January.

“The Tories have tried to present teachers as incompetent and deliberately slowing down the process of returning to normal. But we’ve been proven right time and again that safety precautions must be put in place or cases will rise.

“If Williamson wants to get rid of all safety measures in September, I think education workers should spend the summer planning what action we should take in response.”

**What’s your story?**  
Email with your ideas  
reports@socialistworker.co.uk

## ‘Perfect storm’ is chance for national action in post-16 education

**WORKERS** in post-16 education are discussing how they can unite a number of different fights and push for united, nationwide action.

Activists in the UCU union gathered last week for an online rally. They discussed how to bring together campaigns against casualisation and to defend arts courses—and how to build a fight for better pay, conditions and pensions.

People at the rally were clear that education bosses have used the pandemic as a way to attack workers’ pay and conditions.

Meanwhile, universities in particular have been raking in cash.

They received a staggering £21.5 billion in student fees last year—over a third more than in the 2014-15 academic year.

But that money is not going to workers. Instead universities



Picketing in Leicester earlier this year

PICTURE: LEICESTER UCU

are pushing forward with redundancies and increased casualisation.

UCU members at Liverpool and Leicester universities have been on strike against compulsory redundancies. The union at both universities is organising a marking boycott. Anthony O’Hanlon,

branch president of Liverpool UCU, told the online rally that staff cuts are being made on the basis of “bullshit performance metrics that no one can meet”.

“But fighting back has been key,” he said. “The employers know how important this dispute has been and how much support

has been shown.”

Anthony ended with a call for coordinated action saying, “Next time Liverpool takes action we have to take everyone with us.”

Lecturer Andreas Anastasiou from Leicester university added that coordinated action on the scale of the strikes in 2018 was needed.

He also said that there were issues with the strategy of relying on a marking boycott.

He said bosses at Leicester were finding volunteers and using postgraduate students to mark work that would normally have been assessed by staff who are boycotting.

It is not only in universities that workers are preparing to take action. Twenty colleges are now being balloted for strikes over pay and conditions.

Chair of London region UCU, Margot Hill, told the meeting that

a “perfect storm was brewing” in further education.

“There is real unrest over pay in the colleges. Thirty percent of our pay has gone in ten years and tens of thousands of jobs have been lost.”

She outlined what the UCU should do next.

“We can build locally of course but also we must build nationally. There is potential to have a one-day strike in post-16 education.

“There’s a chance to build a fightback in the autumn.”

There are those at the top of UCU that think that there is no mood to fight, and that action should only be taken locally.

But coordinated strikes across both further and higher education could fend off attacks from the education bosses and the Tories too.

## IN BRIEF

**Bexley bins are back battling again**

AROUND 140 refuse and cleaning workers employed by outsourcer Serco in Bexley, south London, are set to strike from Monday of next week until Monday 25 July over a 1.5 percent pay offer.

Bosses' refusal to hand over back pay have also angered workers.

The Unite union has also accused Serco of victimising union members through the unfair policing of its substance misuse policy.

**It's all kicking off in Ashby-de-la-Zouch**

ENGINEERS EMPLOYED by Brush Electrical Machines, in Ashby-de-la-Zouch, Leicestershire, are striking against bosses' fire and rehire plans.

Thirty Unite union members began strikes on 25 May and are set to continue until Monday 16 August.

Fire and rehire plans will result in a pay cut of between £10,000 and £15,000 a year.

**Ealing traffic wardens rally...**

OUTSOURCED traffic wardens in Ealing, west London, started a two-week strike on Wednesday of last week.

More than 40 Unite union members are fighting bosses' plans to force them to accept severance packages.

Strikers began their action with a rally outside the council offices.

The strike is set to end on Wednesday of next week.

**...and Hackney wardens set to join**

PARKING WARDENS in Hackney, east London, are set to ballot for strikes over pay against employer Apcoa Parking (UK).

They are also fighting the victimisation of a union rep, unfair disciplinary measures, deductions of pay and the imposition of shift changes without consultation.

The ballot is set to run from Wednesday 21 July to Wednesday 18 August.

**Pay fights coming in universities?**

UNISON UNION members in higher education have rejected a pay offer, and the union's service group executive has lodged a formal dispute.

The pay offer was a 1.5 percent increase for most workers with slightly more for the lower paid.

Meanwhile, the Unison union is balloting members at 48 higher education institutes this summer in protest against a pay freeze imposed for the past year.

The ballots in England opened this week and are due to open in Scotland in a few weeks' time.

## SCHOOLS



STRIKERS PUT on a show of force at the Tring Park performing arts school in Hertfordshire

# School strike stops fire and rehire threat

by SAM ORD

TEACHERS AT Tring Park school in Hertfordshire have voted 100 percent in favour of a settlement after just two days of strikes.

The members of the NEU union had taken two of a proposed five days of strikes before the settlement was agreed.

They were fighting against the private performing arts school's governing body over plans to leave the Teacher's Pension Scheme (TPS).

Workers feared this was the run up to impose new contracts via fire and rehire.

The schools governors said, "The decision has been made to withdraw the proposal and all eligible staff will be able to remain in the TPS if they wish

to do so. The threat of fire and rehire is no longer applicable.

"Governors assure staff that no consultation regarding the TPS membership will occur until the announcement of the government revaluation at the earliest."

● WORKERS AT Valence primary school in Dagenham, east London, walked out for the first time last Thursday against significant pay cuts and demotions.

Workers on the picket lines held homemade signs reading, "Education is not a business." They were set to walk out again on Wednesday and Thursday of this week

● Messages of support to [adyke65.301@valenceprimaryschool.com](mailto:adyke65.301@valenceprimaryschool.com) and [abuckley.301@valenceprimaryschool.com](mailto:abuckley.301@valenceprimaryschool.com)

● NEU UNION members at two schools in Derby walked out last Thursday over a restructuring policy implemented by new school operators, Archway Learning Trust.

Picket lines were well attended at Merrill Academy and Lees Brook Community School, and had a lot of support from local residents. Workers believe the new trust will impose larger class sizes and replace qualified teachers with cheaper, newer staff.

This in turn will have an impact on the students' education.

Workers are set to return to the picket lines on Tuesday and Wednesday of next week.

● Send solidarity to [kieran.picken@neu.org.uk](mailto:kieran.picken@neu.org.uk)

## HEALTH

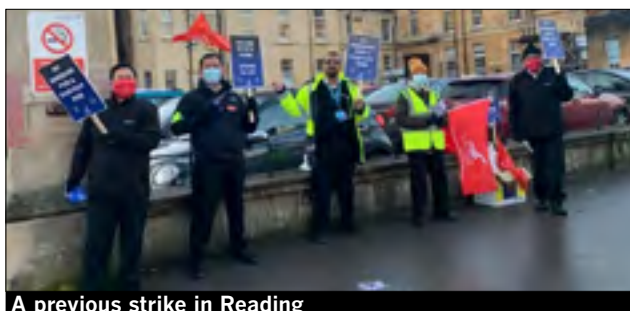
## Security guards begin three week strike

SECURITY STAFF at the Royal Berkshire Hospital in Reading are set to go back on strike from Monday of next week until the end of July.

The 20 security guards voted by 84 percent for strikes against their outsourced employer Kingston Services Group Ltd.

Unite union members say the company has failed to meaningfully negotiate a decent pay offer for 2020.

They also say bosses won't take health and safety concerns seriously, or address disparity in sick pay between colleagues.



A previous strike in Reading

The guards, employed by the Royal Berkshire NHS Foundation Trust, have been involved in a "David and Goliath" battle over pay and conditions since December.

Strikes want to be employed in house under NHS management when their current three-year contract ends on 31 December this year.

## TRANSPORT



On strike in May

PICTURE: GUY SMALLMAN

## Ferry workers respond after second victimisation

Woolwich Ferry workers in south east London kicked off their escalated strikes last week after bosses victimised a second union rep.

Dozens attended picket

lines, shutting down the ferries' operation.

This marks the start of nine days of walkouts across July.

The ferry workers originally took eight days of

action after managers victimised the first rep.

The Unite union members were set to return to picket lines on Friday of this week and Monday of next week.

## EDINBURGH WAVERLEY

## Food workers fully back strikes over Covid bullying

RAIL CATERING workers for Rail Gourmet at Edinburgh Waverley train station are set to strike next month following a 100 percent ballot vote for action.

The will to strike is a result of workers standing up to a culture of bullying and harassment within Edinburgh Waverley.

Two workers faced disciplinary hearings after Rail Gourmet told them to make up symptoms to ensure they got Covid-19 tests.

**Outbreak**

This instruction was in response to an outbreak that closed the firm's Edinburgh premises.

Some 20 percent of Rail Gourmet staff based in Edinburgh have tested positive for Covid-19.

The company supplies various train companies, including LNER which operates key

London-Scotland routes. Workers were set to walk out for four 24-hour strikes.

These were set to take place on 14, 17, 18 and 31 of July.

RMT general secretary Mick Lynch said, "This dispute is all about respect and justice in the workplace."

**Breakdown**

"A culture of bullying and harassment has been allowed to develop at Edinburgh Waverley."

He added that this has led to "a wholesale breakdown in industrial relations."

"Our members are saying enough is enough," Lynch said.

Lynch also added, "It's now down to Rail Gourmet to tackle these long running and deep-seated issues and ensure our members are no longer confronted with this toxic working environment."

Sam Ord

## SCOTRAIL

## Cleaners and presentation staff to refuse overtime

WORKERS ON ScotRail are set to step up their action over pay as more sections prepare to join the fight.

Conductors and ticket examiners in the RMT union are already striking every Sunday in a battle for pay equality.

Now cleaning and train

presentation staff are set to start action short of strikes from Tuesday of next week.

They are demanding equality regarding rest day pay.

Their action will involve refusing overtime, higher grade duty and rest day working.



## CIVIL SERVICE

# DVLA safety strikes hit the bosses hard

by NICK CLARK

**TARGETED STRIKES** by workers at the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency (DVLA) have caused a huge backlog of applications for renewed driving licenses.

People with medical conditions, or who are over 70, must renew their license every one, two, three or five years. But strikes by workers now mean the DVLA is taking months to process every application.

And the workers who process them were set to strike again on Monday, Wednesday and Friday of this week.



PICKETING AT the DVLA

PICTURE: PCS DVLA

## Battle

The strikes are part of a long-running battle by workers at the DVLA offices in Swansea over coronavirus safety.

Bosses want to push more them back to work in the office—despite more than 600 workers there catching Covid. And the workers' PCS union says the DVLA's own figures show cases at the site are increasing once more.

PCS members have been fighting a rolling campaign

of targeted action designed to cause as much disruption as possible over a long period.

Striker and PCS rep Mac told Socialist Worker, "The backlog is piling up. They're clearly panicking about that—they're offering a lot of overtime."

He added that the Drivers Medical department—on strike this week—"is probably the most backlogged area."

"There are lots of complaints coming through,"

he said. Yet bosses still haven't budged—and the action could escalate. The strikers will need solidarity—their battle for Covid safety is one that the whole trade union movement should support.

●Donate to the strike fund.  
Name: Fighting Fund Levy.  
Account number: 20331490  
Sort code: 60-83-01,  
Reference: DVLA. Messages of support and invite strikers to speak at your union branch: [responseteam@pcs.org.uk](mailto:responseteam@pcs.org.uk).

■**OUTSOURCED** cleaners at the department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy headquarters in London have voted to strike.

The workers, employed by outsourcer ISS, voted by 97 percent on an 82 percent turnout, to strike over pay and working conditions.

The members of the PCS union staged an indefinite strike for the London Living Wage in 2019.

## MANUFACTURING

## Fight GKN bosses, but not with nationalism

**WORKERS AT** wheel manufacturer GKN Wheels and Auto Structures in Telford, Shropshire, began strikes on Monday.

Unite and GMB union members are fighting for a pay rise without damaging losses in conditions.

Unite regional officer Jason Richards said, "Our members are incensed at being offered a pay rise only on the condition that the collective redundancy agreement is weakened."

Further strikes are planned on 12 and 19 July.

The GMB issued a press release saying, "Hundreds of England fans will go on strike today". It went on that the company "needs to show the sense of English fair play embodied by the Three Lions".

It added, "Workers on the picket line will be wearing

their England football shirts in honour of the Three Lions' quarter final win over Ukraine on Saturday night."

This nationalist framing doesn't take the battle forward—and could potentially prove divisive. Is every worker an "England fan"?

And if the bosses back England are they on the same side as the workers?

Meanwhile workers at the GKN Automotive factory in Birmingham are preparing for a strike ballot.

The Unite union called the vote as part of a campaign to keep the factory open. In January the 500 workers were told by owners GKN Melrose that the plant was set for closure in 2022.

Unions should fight both of these battles together with hard-hitting strikes.

## FOOTWEAR

## Clarks shoes fire & rehire

**OVER 100** workers at Clarks shoes are considering strikes against fire and rehire.

The firm was taken over by a private equity firm in February.

Around 109 of the 145 workers in the Clarks warehouse in Street, Somerset, are on contracts signed before the takeover. They are on better terms than people recruited more recently.

Bosses want them to accept a new contract. It would slash pay by 15 percent, cut three days' holiday a year, worsen sickness terms and eliminate some breaks and free hot drinks.

Clarks has begun a 45-day consultation, after which it could sack all its workers and say they will be re-employed only on the new contracts.

The workers' Community union has said all options are being considered, including strikes.

## LOCAL GOVERNMENT

**WORKERS AT** Tower Hamlets council in east London staged a physical and online protest on Tuesday of this week to help build support for a strike ballot.

Members of the Unison union are voting over whether to strike over worse contracts forced on them last year.

The Labour-run council used fire and rehire tactics to impose new pay and conditions on workers, despite an impressive strike.

Now it has refused Unison's demands for fairer wages for the lowest paid workers. The ballot is set to end on Thursday 22 July.

■**WASTE** collection workers outsourced to Serco at Sandwell council in the West Midlands are voting on whether to strike over bullying from management.

GMB union members are also being balloted to strike after management decided to sack disabled workers who were forced to shield due to Covid-19.

The ballot is due to close on 22 July.

## TAXI DRIVERS

## Uber gives with one hand, takes away with the other

**TAXI SERVICE** Uber has revealed that it will cut the pay of some of the workers that have been at the company for the longest.

Longer serving drivers at the firm have previously have had 20 percent of their earnings taken by Uber as a service charge. Now the charge will increase to 25 percent, meaning the workers get a 5 percent pay cut.

Uber was forced in February to accept that drivers for the company were in fact workers, not self-employed.

And last month Uber struck a deal with the GMB union meaning that its 700,000 workers could claim union recognition.

But this agreement does not mean that Uber is willing to negotiate—especially over pay.

In fact the Financial Times reported, "Uber will not engage in collective

bargaining over earnings, including the implementation of the minimum wage."

Nader Awaad is the chair of UPHD which is part of the IWGB union.

He said, "We all knew that Uber would raid the drivers' pockets to pay for them breaking the law and depriving drivers of their rights, and here they are doing exactly that."

"This shows Uber cannot be trusted."

Uber is showing that despite admitting its workers are not self employed and coming to an agreement with GMB it will continue to make assaults on workers' pay and conditions.

Union leaders in the GMB need to go beyond striking deals with Uber bosses, and advocate for action, or these attacks will continue.

And if union leaders fail to do so, workers must organise and strike independently.

*Sophie Squire*

## HEALTH WORKERS

## Safer masks cut risk, but cost comes first for bosses

A NEW study of health workers shows that wearing a high grade FFP3 mask can provide up to 100 percent protection against Covid-19.

And there is a far greater chance of workers who wear standard-issue surgical masks catching the virus.

Professional bodies, including the doctors' BMA and the College of Paramedics, have long appealed for Public Health England's (PHE) guidance on masks to be changed. That demand has also been taken up by health unions.

They point to the way FFP3 masks have a close fit and are specifically designed to filter out aerosols.

Airborne particles are the most common way the virus is transmitted.

But PHE insists that

surgical masks are sufficient in most cases—and that FFP3 should only be used in procedures where there is a danger "infection aerosol transmission".

That would include workers who are intubating a patient to take over their breathing.

But it would not cover paramedics sat in the back of an ambulance with a Covid-19 patient waiting hours before being able to admit them into hospital.

Many suspect the cost and availability of FFP3 masks has driven PHE's guidance.

The study shows that health workers caring for Covid-19 patients on "red" wards faced a risk up to 47 times higher than those on non-coronavirus "green" wards.

## ROUND-UP

■**SOME 500** workers at British Sugar factories in Norfolk, Suffolk and Nottinghamshire have rejected a two percent pay offer by 86 percent in a consultative ballot.

Technicians, engineers and supply chain operatives in the Unite union began a strike vote on Monday.

British Sugar made pre-tax profits of £55 million in the year up to August 2020.

■**WORKERS FOR** delivery company Yodel, in Hatfield, Hertfordshire, will vote in a consultative ballot on whether to strike over pay

and conditions. The GMB union says the company has brought in agency drivers that are being paid more than those directly employed by Yodel. This is a breach of an agreement.

Drivers are also angry that Yodel changes shift patterns without consulting them.

■**BOSSSES AT** Newsquest are using fire and rehire tactics at the Oxford Mail to force through cuts to NUJ union members' terms and conditions.

Proposed cuts include stripping journalists of bank holiday payments.





SCHOOL STUDENTS in London strike for the climate in 2019 to demand fundamental system change

PICTURE: SCHOOL STRIKE 4 CLIMATE

# SCHOOL CLIMATE STRIKES CALLED AS HEATWAVE HITS

by SOPHIE SQUIRE

**YOUTH CLIMATE group Fridays for Future has announced a global climate strike on 24 September.**

The group said, “Together we will fight for a just future where no one is left behind.”

“The historical victories of collective action have proven the need for the youth to stand united with the multisectoral, intergenerational struggle for a better future for all—a future where people and planet are prioritised.”

The strike was called as terrifying new evidence of the severity of the climate crisis exposed itself in a heat wave last week.

And in a show of bosses’ destructive pursuit of profit, an underwater gas pipeline burst in the Gulf of Mexico, causing flames to burst from the sea.

The pipeline is under the control of Petroleos Mexicanos or Pemex, which is owned by the Mexican state. Climate activists used the

incident to condemn the extractive oil and gas industry, which pollutes the planet but and can never be safe.

Greta Thunberg spoke about the blaze in a video posted to social media. She said, “The people in power call themselves ‘climate leaders’ as they open up new oilfields, pipelines and coal power plants—granting new oil licences and exploring future oil drilling sites.”

“This is the world they are leaving for us.”

Meanwhile, hundreds of people have been killed by a heatwave sweeping parts of the United States and Canada. In Canada it is feared that up to 700 people have died due to the rising temperatures.

## Recorded

Lytton, in the province of British Columbia, recorded temperatures of nearly 50 degrees Celsius last Tuesday—a new record for Canada.

The death count in Oregon, in the US was 95 on Sunday.

The heatwave has been attributed to a “heat dome”.



Protests in Canada raised the alarm about climate change

**Infrastructure in the US is unable to cope with the high temperatures**

This occurs when air from the Pacific Ocean becomes trapped and is heated.

Layers of hot air have increased the thickness of the atmosphere across the region, creating a “dome.”

The heat increases the thickness of the air, further raising temperatures.

The climate crisis will mean that extreme weather events such as this will become more common. Across the Pacific Northwest

in the US, the infrastructure is unable to cope with the increased temperatures, causing dozens of deaths.

The region, which usually has mild weather, is suffering electricity blackouts, and water shortages.

Some bosses are concerned that the heatwave will affect the fruit harvests throughout the region.

But they offer nothing to protect fruit workers.

## Season

The United Farm Workers union tweeted, “Washington does not require employers to provide us (farmworkers) with the heat protections needed to save our lives. This must change.”

“It’s the cherry season, so conditions are incredibly dangerous. With labour needs at peak capacity, workers from 12 years old to over 70 are out working.”

And the extreme weather isn’t confined to the Pacific Northwest. Weather warnings were in place in California and Nevada. President Joe

Biden admitted that the US needed better infrastructure to deal with the effects of the climate crisis in a speech last week.

He is currently pushing for an infrastructure bill. This will supposedly provide more funds for roads, broadband and public transport—although it’s far less than Biden originally promised.

But activists say it doesn’t provide enough funding for climate adaptations.

Biden’s assurances that he is committed to fighting climate change didn’t stop his Secret Service from arresting dozens of climate activists protesting outside the White House.

The youth activists from the Sunrise Movement successfully blocked all ten of the White House’s entrances on Monday to demand that Biden invests in more infrastructure and job creation.

Unless there is immediate action to begin to tackle climate change, there will be more horrors like the present heatwave—and worse.